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## Father Sorge: the virus of individualism and Europe as a vaccine

Passionate about politics, attuned to ongoing socio-cultural transformations, defender of European integration, analyst of the global landscape marked by the Covid-19 pandemic. Father Bartolomeo Sorge passed away on 2 November at the age of 91. A posthumous book will be published next 3 December, "Perché l'Europa ci salverà ci salverà. Dialoghi al tempo della pandemia" (*Edizioni Terra Santa*) written with Chiara Tintori. It can be described as the "civil testament" of the Jesuit priest, journalist, writer, polemicist, among the initiators of the so-called "Palermo Spring". He trained generations of youths encouraged by him to take their future into their own hands. The book also examines aspects of the pandemic and daily life restrictions; the various forms of racism that "contaminate" civil life; the conundrums of Italian politics, challenged by the crisis; populism and nationalism; Christian presence today and the Church of Bergoglio. SIR interviewed **Chiara Tintori**, political scientist. She previously co-authored with Father Sorge the book "Perché il populismo fa male al popolo" (Why populism harms the people). **The new volume, to be presented on December 3 (at 4 p.m., with the participation of Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute in Paris) is a fruit of your ceaseless cooperation. What was it like working side-by-side with Father Bartolomeo?** It was fascinating. First of all for his distinctive intellectual vigour. He showed an interest in everything, ranging from Italian politics and the life of the Church, to the options of Twitter, which he used fluently and autonomously. Working at his side, especially in these months of pandemic, was a true blessing! I appreciated his clarity, his ability to select incisive terms tailored to his thoughts. It always amazed me how rarely he corrected our drafts: we never had more than two versions of the written texts, because there were two of us writing. This way of proceeding transmitted respect and peacefulness.



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[First of all, I must admit that I still find it hard to regard "Perche l'Europa ci salverà" as a posthumous book: Father Sorge passed away only recently, on November 2. However, I concur that it can be viewed as his civil testament. During the months of isolation - in his case at the Aloisianum Jesuit Institute in Gallarate \(Varese\) from the end of February 2020 to the day of his death - our video calls increased, partly to exchange thoughts on current events, and partly for my constant yearning to assimilate just an inch of his acumen in interpreting the signs of the times. We then reflected on whether our conversations could benefit others as well. Thus the format "20' with Father Sorge" - "20' con padre Sorge" - was created \(still available on YouTube - \*Ed.'s note\*\) that accompanied us for 5 "episodes" from June 30 to October 15 on the social channels of ETS publishing House. \*\*Did the book take shape at that time?\*\* It did. These videos constitute the very seeds of the book, featuring discussions on how we relate to the pandemic, on the different forms of racism that contaminate civil life, on the European Union, "our common home", on the conundrums of Italian politics in bad shape, on the Church of Pope Francis and his attempt to "repair it." And, finally, on the latest social](#)



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The distinctive feature of our conversations is clear: the pandemic has exposed the delusion of individualism, and no one is saved alone. That's why Europe will save us. If we want Italy to be rebuilt having at heart the common good (and not only the well-being of many) we must extend our gaze to a European Union where ethics, solidarity and fraternity form the foundation of our living together. It is not just a question of improving the efficiency of EU institutions, which is essential per se, or of improving existing mechanisms and regulations to ensure that the Europe of peoples inspires the Europe of governments, it is a question of bringing about a radical transformation in thought and action. It is time for a cultural conversion that values the diversity of each individual, to rapidly progress towards social friendship, starting from the peripheries of our common home. **Would you describe Father Sorge as a “Europeanist”?** Absolutely. He was a staunch pro-European, and for this very reason he fervently hoped that the present times, marked by the pandemic, would prompt an outburst of responsibility on everyone's part, without which the European Union risks becoming the shadow of its former self.



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