

Coronavirus, Monsignor Paglia: “Non è il momento degli egoismi, ma della solidarietà”

“Gli interessi di parte sono già da ora inghiottiti da un modello di sviluppo che ha fallito. E' bastato un microrganismo per metterci tutti e tutto in ginocchio. La politica è per il futuro non difendere un passato che scompare”



During Mass at Santa Marta, The Pope said people are beginning to get hungry, beginning to see the post-pandemic. What should we do now?

Pope Francis is concerned about the seriousness of the situation. His heartfelt prayer in the empty St. Peter's Square—like being alone before God—presses us as well to find concrete answers, and right away. The Church must do its part: pray to Heaven but stay next to people on the ground, close to those in need. We must set out toward a new “multiplication of the loaves” a fair and effective sharing of resources. If we don't multiply what we have and do so quickly, anger is what will multiply.

There are increasing cases of "attacks" on supermarkets. In Sicily and in Naples, where a retiree was arrested for shoplifting pasta, oil and tomatoes. How can we help the many who work off the books, ineligible for any assistance? Is there a risk that fear will become anger?

I think it is essential to give a message of hope. To everyone. Now is not a time for anger, for useless arguments, for loss of hope or for selfishness. It's a time for solidarity: the most powerful antivirus. Solidarity, it's the approach that leads to concrete action. To me, and this is a positive, it looks like the government knows the situation well and is working in the right direction. Certainly, immediate action is necessary for those who have nothing.

On the basis of what happened in 2008, some food banks are projecting a 40% increase in poverty. Will it be possible to avoid this new catastrophe?

Italy has gone through very serious difficulties. I'm reminded of the last world war: 30 years later and it had recovered. If I think of all Europe, it witnessed the same devastation and it began again. Perhaps we risk losing the memory of these challenges, enjoying as we have—for a short time—our good times, often not shared. Today we can save ourselves, but only together. Pope Francis said this as well. That 40% becomes dramatic if we don't do something right away. We're all in the same boat, some in the stern, some at the bow, some below decks, but everyone must have a place at table. And I'm talking literally about bread to eat.

Pope Francis emphasized that no one is saved alone. Are European and Italian politicians aware of this?

Let me say that solidarity has two sides. One is people, as I mentioned. The other is politics, which has to eliminate national or corporate exclusivity. In Italy and in all Europe. The challenge that we face is an absolute emergency. The old world is finished and won't come back. Partisan interests have even now been swallowed up in failed development models. A microorganism was enough to put us all on our knees. Politics has to look to the future rather than defending a vanishing past.

At this point the government seems firm in its direction. Do you think that for now it's up to the challenge?

There is no doubt that we are faced with a totally unprecedented situation. The answer, it seems to me, has become more and more focused, but I think improvement is still needed. We need to leap forward with intelligence and boldness. The pope said we must all pull in the same direction: the executive, legislature, unions, civil society. And the Church as well, with the other religions. All together toward a future that has to be built. Since we are talking about war, let's renew the spirit of post-war Italy! There is no "my" food supply at the expense of "yours." There is only one shopping cart for everybody!

Everyone says the Corona virus will change us. How? Will isolation give us new understanding, or will it make us even more distrustful of each other?

I am convinced that we are discovering the vital importance of solidarity as an element of politics. Each citizen can act as an energy field that sets antibodies in motion against the virus trying to cause the collapse of society. We have understood this. We are staying at home for ourselves and for everyone else. This is solidarity. We are also rediscovering valuable opportunities for communication (with technology, the internet, we can now spread ideas, views, proposals, dreams). Schools are doing it. Civil society can also benefit and can restart the economy with these tools. That's why I said the old world is over. We are in that change of an age that Pope Francis often talks about.

What hope do we have? Is the Church up to the challenge?

Pope Francis continues to emphasize hope. For believers, God does not abandon his people. And He asks everyone to hold on to each other, beyond all division. We remember that Pope St. John said, "Let us seek what unites us and leave aside what divides us." We have to build today the country of tomorrow. Or it will be too late. The Church, for her part, lives to serve the whole country, starting with the poorest. The open doors of the Church tell everyone—even those who do not believe—that the doors to the future are not closed. The Pope invites all Christians, men and women, priests and lay people, to be an example of assistance, but also of thinking about the future. Many, many believers and non-believers are working together now with the sick. An alliance of solidarity among all. This is what we must dream for tomorrow's Italy! We can keep the country open, without stopping it, indeed creating already new ways to continue to care for those in need, to create relationships and weave them together, thinking through a new model of development.

The pandemic is killing many victims among the elderly. Does this mean a further loss of historic memory?

Exactly, the old world is over! The society where the others are abandoned, the elderly, doesn't work, it has never worked, it will never work. We have made enormous mistakes in this area. I remember Father Oreste Benzi saying, with bitterness, "God created the family, we created the bureaucracies." Today we see our elders die alone, without the comfort of a close, friendly, family presence. There is already something we must do in this regard. The elderly should continue to live with their families! This is God's Fourth Commandment. And right away, somebody, no matter who, must intervene to save the elderly who are living in care facilities. Saving the elderly would be a clear sign that we are beginning to rebuild our country!