

In order to recover the sense of living together

In a troubled general climate, with significant political changes underway and a weak economic recovery that has left many in conditions of uncertainty and suffering, and in an increasingly complicated and dramatic international situation, on December 4 we will be called upon to voice our will in the referendum on the reform of the Constitution approved by Parliament. In particular, all citizens will have to express their choice about ending the two chamber Parliament in which each chamber has equal powers, and on the reformulation of the responsibilities of the national and regional governments.

1. Beyond the logic of *disengagement* and of *alignment*

For months, the debate about the reform has been burdened by strained interpretations and exploitations that have strongly polarized the political formations and transformed the referendum into a test of the current government, and its premier in particular. Added to this is increasing disaffection, charged with distrust and resentment, with political participation, which in all likelihood once again in this important appointment at the voting booths will consolidate the tendency toward abstention.

In these conditions, only two antithetical positions seem possible: on the one hand, *sterile indifference* and *cynical disengagement*, and on the other, *the logic of a priori alignment* that blocks a true comparison of ideas and reasons with the other. Both positions strike us as humanly and politically arid and unproductive, if not even deleterious, for those who advance them as well.

Even before the judgments on the merit of the solutions adopted by the reform that is the object of this referendum (and which deserve very careful examination), no one can be unaware of the true urgent need of the moment: the need that has advanced in recent years for a more stable and efficient political system that can promote better conditions of life for every citizen and the country, in sight of the fundamental objective that has always existed, that is, the promotion of the common good. As Fr. Giussani observed, “The contract that regulates common life (the “Constitution”) must seek to provide increasingly perfect regulations that assure citizens shared living as communion and to educate them to it.”

2. The need for change

The urgent need for change is acknowledged by opposing alignments and positions, regardless of the evaluations that each may give on the adequacy of this reform. Simple realism recognizes that the country needs to be reformed in order to keep up with a global world, a society that changes and renews itself at an increasingly rapid pace.

During the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Italian Republic, President Mattarella identified Italy’s greatest need today: “**To wholly recover the sense of living together,**” because “today’s great challenges can be faced and governed only by seeking and finding common policies and shared engagement.” His words are all the more urgent in a political context that has long been characterized by the delegitimization of the other, by defining oneself first of all as “against” someone or something. We need to learn from the best expressions of our history: those who wrote the 1948 Constitution were animated by the desire to imagine realistic and reasonable solutions for

a common journey. Realities that differed greatly from each other were capable of a dialogue full of reciprocal respect, which enabled them to acknowledge as a shared foundation the value of the person and the freedom of expression and association.

We should keep in mind the words of the President of the Republic when he inaugurated the Meeting of Rimini: our country “needs renewed enthusiasm, fraternity, curiosity about the other, desire for a future, courage to take on the new challenges that face us (...) in a time of epochal changes. (...) not allowing our fears to get the best of us.”

Without the presence of people who are authentically open to encounter, dialogue and collaboration with others, any reform can be reduced to a merely technical exercise or a battle for power.

3. Our contribution: the beauty of opening yourself to the other

It is evident that a *yes* or a *no* on the constitutional referendum cannot magically solve any of today’s knotty problems, from the crisis of the social state to the questioning of the project of Europe, from the demographic collapse to the influx of migrants. However, we are aware that through the vote, or even before that through the richness of life, of encounters and of deeper examination of the issues that we will promote around us, each person can give a contribution to the common good of our country. This is the challenge. Each of us is given an opportunity to rise to the occasion.

Starting from the evidence that “the other is a good and not an obstacle to the fullness of our ‘I,’ in politics as well as in human and social relations” (Fr. Carrón), we desire that also this referendum become an opportunity for each of us to discover the beauty and advantageousness of opening up to the other in a true dialogue, without defensively closing in on ourselves before we even start, or digging into a position of blind obedience to a party line, but instead, collaborating with all those who expend themselves in the search for the best for all. The rediscovery of the “sense of living together” is at stake now: nothing is more vital for a country that wants to continue to exist and to grow.

Communion and Liberation

October 2016