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Message of the Holy Father to participants in the international conference organized for the centenary of Don Luigi Sturzo's Appeal "To all free and strong men" (Caltagirone, 14-16 June 2019)

Yesterday the Holy Father Francis sent a message for the inauguration of the international conference organized on the occasion of the centenary of Don Luigi Sturzo's Appeal "To all free and strong men", taking place in Caltagirone, Catania, from 14 to 16 June 2019, on the theme "The timeliness of a new commitment".

Born in Caltagirone, Sicily, Luigi Sturzo (1871-1959) was an Italian priest and politician, general secretary of Catholic Action, and was interested in the participation and contribution of Catholics to politics. He was the creator, together with Alcide de Gasperi, of the *Partito Popolare Italiano*, cradle of Christian Democracy. In 2017 the diocesan phase of his beatification cause was concluded.

In his message, the Pope writes that "This centenary gives us the opportunity to reflect on the Christian conception of social life and on charity in public life in accordance with the thought, life and works of the Servant of God Don Luigi Sturzo. For the priest of Caltagirone, the task of informing social and political life in a Christian way corresponds above all to the Christian laity who, through their own commitment and in the freedom that belongs to them in this area, implement the social teachings of the Church, formulating a creative synthesis between faith and history that finds its fulcrum in natural love vivified by divine grace".

Don Sturzo, "in a very original way, tried to achieve a Christian 'orthopraxis' of politics, based on a correct relationship between ethics and theological life, between the spiritual dimension and the social dimension His teaching and his testimony of faith should not be forgotten, especially at a time when politics should have wide-ranging views to face the serious anthropological crisis. Therefore, we must remember the central points of the social anthropology of Sturzo: the primacy of the person over society, of society over the State and of morality over politics; the centrality of the family, the defence of property with its social function as a requirement of freedom; the importance of work as the right and duty of every man; and the construction of a just peace through the creation of a true international community. These values are based on the assumption that Christianity is a message of salvation embodied in history, which is addressed to all humanity and must positively influence both private and public moral life".

"One hundred years after the Appeal 'To all free and strong men', the Conference held in Caltagirone urges creative and responsible commitment on the part of Christians, called to interpret the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel , to realize a social and political praxis animated by faith and lived as an intrinsic requirement of charity", concludes the Pontiff.
