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# **BOLLETTINO**

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## **Press Conference to present the conferral of the Paul VI International Award 2023**

At midday today, a press conference was livestreamed from the Holy See Press Office, Pius X Hall, Via dell'Ospedale 1, to present the conferral of the Paul VI International Award 2023 on the theme: "Paul VI and Italy: the historical legacy and the present day".

The speakers were: Don Angelo Maffeis, president of the Paul VI Institute of Brescia; Professor Andrea Riccardi, professor emeritus of contemporary history, member of the Scientific Committee of the Paul VI Institute; and Mr. Pierpaolo Camadini, president of the Christian Education Society.

The following are the interventions by Don Angelo Maffeis and Mr. Pierpaolo Camadini:

### **Intervention of Don Angelo Maffeis**

I would like to address my warmest greeting to the journalists present and to all those who have accepted our invitation. I thank in particular Dr. Matteo Bruni and Dr. Cristiane Murray for hosting our meeting in this prestigious venue.

The reason for this gathering is the announcement that the Paul VI Institute of Brescia has decided to confer the Paul VI International Award to the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, and the award ceremony will be carried out by the Holy Father Pope Francis on 29 May 2023, the day dedicated to the liturgical memorial of Saint Paul VI and shortly before the seventieth anniversary of his election to the papacy (21 June 1963).

The Paul VI Institute expresses its profound gratitude to the Holy Father who, like his immediate predecessors in the past, has accepted to present the award personally. It is a gesture that demonstrates Pope Francis' veneration for Paul VI, his esteem for President Sergio Mattarella and, we dare say, also his appreciation for the work that the Paul VI Institute has been carrying out for 44 years now, to keep the memory of the Brescian Pope alive and to study his teachings and work.

In this context, under the guidance of Dr. Giuseppe Camadini, president for 33 years, alongside the compilation of archives, the editing of sources, the organization of study meetings and publishing activity, our Institute has

organized the Paul VI International Award, assigned to figures who “with their study and works have contributed to the growth of the religious sense of the world” (*Statute*, art. 3f). The Award is intended, in particular, to acknowledge the cultural fruitfulness of the Christian message, capable of promoting authentic humanism.

The attribution of the Paul VI International Award to President Mattarella is intended to emphasize how political action and service to the common good in the exercise of various institutional functions may be one of the most significant areas in which this can take place.

Paul VI's was without doubt an ecclesial ministry, to which it would be mistaken to attribute an immediate political value. But without doubt Pope Montini traversed the twentieth century with great participation in Italian and international affairs. As ecclesiastical assistant to the FUCI, in a context dominated by the Fascist regime, he contributed to the formation to freedom of the young students he met in university campuses throughout Italy; as Substitute of the Secretariat of State, after World War II, he accompanied the growth of the young Italian democracy; during his episcopate in Milan he measured himself against the profound transformations taking place in the cultural and social spheres; finally, as Pope, he continued to follow Italian events, with absolute respect for the autonomy of the civil sphere and, at the same time, with intimate personal participation, in the fervid climate of the Council as in the dramatic years bloodied by terrorism.

The spirit with which Montini viewed politics is well summed up in a letter addressed to his father Giorgio, who in 1924 was uncertain about whether to run in the political elections. His son encourages him to accept the candidacy and to take on the responsibility it entails:

*“It is truly a difficult task to remain faithful to the ancient conception of a policy that is rigorously autonomous and sincerely open to understanding every possibility of concord. I am often worried about what the future will hold for the Italian people, who are forming more and more of a sectarian mentality when they defend a programme, and a bold disavowal of programmes when they find interest in them. The display of heroic poses is pitiful, when one thinks on what miserable personal virtues, on what selfish concepts it is based. He who dares the most, seems a more deserving citizen [...].*

*Dear Father, I value instead with satisfaction the effort, like yours, of those who seek superior reasons of consistency and political morality to remain in the field of competition, rather than withdrawing to criticise, and to dream. [...] One of the gravest dangers for a country is that the honest, the upright, the competent should leave its political currents; it is therefore an act of civil virtue to remain there even when one must remain there as overtaken and defeated; and Providence, if it has to draw from some human pretext reason for its mercies, will certainly bend to bless those peoples for whom disinterested people have lost their own glory to save their honour.*

*I believe that young people, although so distracted today by excessive, simplistic, superficial forms, are still able, after the war, to understand such heroism. In any case, they are not lost. Time will gather them up; and those who have faith will sow more for the time to come than for the present. Will there be a day when it will be understood that the best polemic, the only beneficial and Christian one, must convince in order to win? I don't know, but we must work as if it were to come; work loyally, chivalrously, without a moment's distrust” (Family Affections, Spirituality and Politics, pp. 324-325).*

### **Intervention of Mr. Pierpaolo Camadini**

In thanking you in my turn for taking part in this press conference and for the attention given today to the Paul VI Institute, I for my part would like to outline the institutional context from which the International Award takes its cue.

It is supported by the *Opera per l'Educazione Cristiana*, the Christian Education Society, which is an

ecclesiastical foundation with primarily educational purposes, an expression of the diocese of Brescia, through which, on the death of Paul VI, the same diocese intended to honour his memory and the study of his thought and work, promoting the “Paul VI Institute” within it.

Besides initiatives especially oriented to the formation of young people, the *Opera per l'Educazione Cristiana* is therefore engaged in the functions of organization and support of the institutional activities proper to the Paul VI Institute and the Centre for Research and Studies on the Pontiff of Brescia, set up in Concesio, on the outskirts of Brescia, at the birthplace of Saint Paul VI. The *Opera* has also promoted the valorization, through the setting up of a special museum section, of an important collection of contemporary art works originally donated by the authors personally to Giovanni Battista Montini and then destined to the Foundation, upon his death, by Monsignor Pasquale Macchi.

With the Paul VI International Award, promoted by the Institute, the *Opera per l'Educazione Cristiana* intends to highlight the universal value of the spiritual and cultural witness of Saint Paul VI, which transcends local memory to become a paradigm of comparison that is profoundly relevant to contemporary humanity.

The *Opera per l'Educazione Cristiana* is particularly honoured by the acceptance of the Paul VI Award by President Sergio Mattarella, and warmly grateful to the Holy Father Pope Francis for having made himself available to celebrate the award in memory of his venerable Predecessor.

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