

2016 Local Elections in Italy POLITICS IS A GOOD

“Please, do not watch life from the balcony, but commit yourselves, immerse yourselves in the vast social and political dialogue” (Pope Francis in Florence, November 10, 2015).

Watching from the balcony, from above. Isn't this the attitude many of us have when we talk about politics? Overwhelmed by the difficulties and problems that at times seem insurmountable, **we can experience a kind of fatigue in regards to our freedom and responsibility**, which leads to a growing apathy towards voting and distrust of any kind of political structure.

But this apathy and distrust do not originate in politics; their source is quite different. It is a crisis of the “I” in the face of “life that cuts you down” (C. Pavese, *Dialogues with Leucò*), manifesting itself as an unconquerable boredom, a mysterious lethargy.

Is there any hope of escaping this paralysis that leaves us disappointed and dissatisfied?

Perhaps the slightest attention to ourselves would suffice to recognize that **the desire for good**—even a trace, even subconsciously—**still remains in every person**. It's “the need for well-defined, proper relationships between persons and groups, the natural human need for co-existence that may help the person to affirm himself or herself and for ‘social’ relationships that do not obstruct the growth of the personality.” (L. Giussani, *The Journey to Truth is an Experience*).

It is this desire, the banner of human freedom, which is **at the core of an authentic democratic spirit** which affirms and respects all men and women in their total need for truth, beauty, justice, goodness and happiness. Everything in societal life should have as its aim keeping alive and **nourishing this desire, which is the source of values and initiatives** that bring men and women together.

In 1992, when Italy was immersed in the confusion of a political and juridical uproar, Fr. Giussani didn't watch life from the balcony, but rather offered his contribution by inviting everyone to really risk on this desire: **“Who knows whether this desire to make one's children's lives less difficult might, at a certain point, break through the horizon**. If, in other words, those who have this desire might understand that in order for it to be fulfilled, an ideal is needed, hope is needed. I think we can hope for this” (*Corriere della Sera*, October 18, 1992).

As Christians, **we belong to a place that nourishes this hope** and spurs our interest in life in all of its aspects, from our closest and most familiar relationships, to global affairs. As Pope Francis said in Florence, “We must always remember, however, that authentic humanism does not exist unless it contemplates love as a bond between human beings, be it of an interpersonal, intimate, social, political or intellectual nature. Rooted herein is **the need for dialogue and encounter in order to build together** with others in civil society. Believers are citizens.”

Those who run in the upcoming local elections do so either trying to carve out a scrap of power for themselves, thereby wearing more and more on the freedom and responsibility of the people, or they can **demonstrate that it's possible to work for the common good**, with humility and without seeking personal gain, through dialogue and encounter. Acting with prudence and realism, without making promises which cannot be kept, each candidate can be a witness that politics is a good.

Committing oneself to the good of all through work in local government **is a good in itself**, helping to make our cities into homes that are livable for each and every person.