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Letter of the Holy Father Francis for the 30th anniversary of the killing of Don Giuseppe Diana

The following is the Letter sent by the Holy Father Francis to Bishop Angelo Spinillo of Aversa, for the 30th anniversary of the killing of Don Giuseppe Diana:

Letter of the Holy Father

To my dear Brother,

Msgr. Angelo SPINILLO

Bishop of Aversa

The memory of the tragic event that took place thirty years ago, when Don Giuseppe Diana, parish priest of San Nicola di Bari in Casal di Principe, on the morning of 19 March 1994, was barbarously killed, stirs in the souls of all those who knew and loved him, emotion as well as gratitude to God the Father for having given the Church this “good and faithful servant” (*Mt 25:14*), who worked prophetically by plunging into the existential wilderness of a people so dear to him, served and defended to the point of sacrificing his life.

I would like, therefore, to address a fatherly thought to the entire diocesan community and especially the faithful of the parish of Casal di Principe who, in memory of Don Peppe, as he was affectionately known, wants to live the same hope of walking together incarnating Christian prophecy, which invites us to build a world free from the yoke of evil and from every type of criminal domination. My gratitude goes also to those who continue the pastoral work that Don Diana undertook as spiritual assistant to associations and groups of faithful, in particular the young and in relation to the Scouts.

I express my closeness and encouragement to all of you who, guided by the prophetic proclamation “*for the love of my people*” (cf. *Is 62:1*), persevere on the path traced by Don Diana and, with daily effort, patiently cultivate

the seed of justice and the dream of human and social development for your land.

Even today, the sad story recounted in Sacred Scripture of the first fratricide of Cain against his brother Abel (cf. *Gen 4:8*) is repeated. This tragic story retains its relevance when one human being raises his hand to strike another, just as it happens in the many forms of hatred and abuse that wound human beings and sometimes bathe the streets of our neighbourhoods and cities in blood. Therefore, the commemoration of Don Giuseppe's sacrifice spurs us to revive in us that *evangelical restlessness* that inspired his priesthood and led him without hesitation to contemplate the face of the Father in every brother, witnessing to those who feel wounded the plan of God, so that everyone might live in justice, peace and freedom.

Faced with that violence an inhuman abuse that denies justice and cancels out the dignity of people, Christians are those who proclaim the Gospel and live the vocation of being, with Christ, a sign of a new humanity, made fruitful by fraternity and communion. Such awareness, back in 1982, led the Bishops of Campania to "*raise the voice of denunciation loud and forcefully re-propose the project of the new man, created according to God in justice and truth (cf. Eph 4:24) ... and emphasize the strident contrast that exists between the false messages of the Camorra and the message of Jesus Christ*" (Campania Episcopal Conference, *For the love of my people I will not stay silent*, 1982). At the same time, we strongly feel the relevance of the words that Don Peppe Diana, with the parish priests of the pastoral area of Casal di Principe, spoke at Christmas 1991: "*As baptized in Christ, as pastors... God calls us to be prophets. The prophet acts as a sentinel: he sees injustice, denounces it and recalls God's original plan*" (cf. *Ez 3:16-18*)' (Forania di Casal di Principe, *For the love of my people*, 1991).

On this important anniversary of the killing of this courageous disciple of the Master, I invite you to strengthen faith and hope in the truth of God, to welcome His Word and to cherish the purpose of building a society, finally purified from the shadows of sin, capable of venturing on a future of concord and fraternity.

Before concluding, moved by sentiments of trust, I exhort you young people, the beautiful and limpid face of this land: do not let yourselves be robbed of hope, cultivate lofty ideals and build a different future with hands not stained with blood but with honest work, without giving in to easy but illusory compromises, picking up the spiritual legacy of Don Peppe to become, in your turn, artisans of peace.

While I entrust everyone to the maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the intercession of Saint Joseph, a righteous man and father in tenderness, I bless you from my heart, asking you, please, not to forget to pray for me.

Faternally yours,

Rome, from Saint John Lateran, 19 March 2024

Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Patron of the Universal Church

Francis
