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Cardinal to the mayors, “He who sows far and wide, shall reap far and wide”

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Patience, far-sightedness, perseverance. These three words encapsulate the best advice of the **Archbishop of Milan, Dionigi Tettamanzi, during the usual meeting with the local administrators** of the diocese of Milan, an important area, that corresponds with the great economic interests of the country, but which contains deeply rooted human and social capital. And it was to the people that have to manage these resources that the Cardinal was speaking, **when he chose the well-known parable of the sower** from Luke's Gospel. After the speech, many people came to shake the hand of the Cardinal, who remained for long time to talk with the numerous mayors and administrators that had come to listen to him.

“And like the sower, the wise administrator sows seeds plentifully, not only in good soil, but also in the soil he finds along the road, between rocks, and among thorns,” Tettamanzi explained, quoting the parable. Administrators are the people that can and must take care of the territory, they must seek to achieve genuine agreement over the choices to be made, especially for the most important ones. He added that they should also have the virtue of being far-sighted, of being able to distinguish between what is essential and what can be dealt with at a later time, and this should make them want to listen closely to the primary everyday needs, which are often forgotten, as they become distracted by other things that are extraordinary, attractive, and that arouse strong emotions.

To help to look after the territory, Tettamanzi suggested four “Building yards”, just as he had in his “Speech to the City”, last autumn, four essential points that an administrator must never lose sight of. “The first building yard,” Tettamanzi said, “is for understanding and sharing the secret of fertile land (**what works**) with land that is either not very, or not at all productive.

The Archbishop continued, “The second building yard serves to identify, manage and press for the interventions necessary for those, in every community, that need help in order to become self-sufficient again. This must be **an opportunity to understand in good time the new types of poverty and their evolution**, to encourage voluntary organisations and the non-profit sector to adapt to needs, and thereby achieve greater entrepreneurial autonomy. The third building yard is necessary **to watch over and intervene in education**. The fourth building yard is for working to monitor and reduce as much as possible the forms of social exclusion that the physically and the mentally handicapped, the terminally ill, prisoners and the homeless, for example, experience.”

During his speech, the Archbishop also touched on a theme dear to him, that should never be lacking among the recommendations to local politicians, namely, the moderation and “benevolence of their words”. According to Tettamanzi, never before have these qualities been so necessary, as **“even at a local level, the bad habit of the verbal aggression on the part of politicians is gaining ground**, creating a sad spectacle in television debates, and even in

the more noble offices of the government.”

“This aggression is unacceptable,” he said, “not only because it is a sign of rudeness, but because it can be contagious and can go from words to deeds.”

One final piece of advice from the Cardinal concerned the difficulties, and the sense of disproportion that some representatives of the small, occasionally very small, communities may have with respect to the needs of their people. Here too, one parable from the Gospels came to his aid, that of the mustard seed. “An extremely small, almost invisible seed, grows to become a great tree, full of foliage and fruit.”

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