

## IGINO GIORDANI THE POLITICIAN

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**Iginio Giordani: courage for political coherence** - Giordani can be considered as a witness to a political culture that values coherence, dialogue, and peace-building. Giordani was a person who was completely free, even from the influence of power. His life challenges us even today.

**Among the pioneers of the newly formed IPP<sup>1</sup> with Sturzo** – His political biography began in 1919 when he became one of the first to respond to the “Appeal to the Free and Strong” launched by Sturzo. Giordani followed him in the affairs of the newly formed People’s Party.

Giordani put himself forward to the general public through *The Catholic Revolt* (1925), a book which fiercely opposed the pervasive system of Fascist power, was hard on those Catholic fringes who had succumbed to the lures of the regime. Already in this text, he affirmed the need to anchor human coexistence on universal brotherhood.

Through some of his apologetic books, he challenged the ideologies of his time and asserted that the spirit of service and charity must animate politics and power.

**Holiness and politics** – Giordani ran in the elections of 1924 and 1946. In 1946, entering the realms of politics as a member of the Constituent Assembly and as a parliamentarian of the Chamber of Deputies for Christian Democracy, he posed this question: “*Can a politician be a saint?*”

Promoted director of “*Il Popolo*”, the party’s newspaper, he noted in his diary: “*To spread holiness from a humble newspaper sheet; to spread holiness from a corridor of lost footsteps... who shall perform this miracle?*”

Early on in his new political experience, he encountered many difficulties. In order not to violate his professional integrity by subjecting the newspaper to the interplay of party currents, he chose to step down as its director, and prayed: “*May this humiliation serve to place me back, with my naked soul, before You, Lord.*” He had to register “*misunderstandings, slanders, taunts, and abandonment*” which brought him “*disappointments and sadness*”; he understood that they were “*trials*” so as to become a saint.

**Unsullied pacifist** – Giordani’s commitment for peace was prophetic and firm: he was a pacifist during the dramatic years of the First World War when civil society was divided between the neutralists and the interventionists. He was a pacifist when he envisioned a United States of Europe and an International Europe since the early 1920’s. Again, he yearned for peace and universal brotherhood when – in a famous parliamentary speech in 1949 – he adhered to the North Atlantic Treaty which he considered not only as an instrument of defense but as a principle for the pacification of the European peoples, including Russia. His idea of peace sprang directly from the law of charity, from the need for solidarity, along with the rational, social, and economic demands. “*War is murder*” (killing is against the Fifth Commandment), “*it represents deicide*” (it eliminates in the human person the being and image of God); and it is suicide because especially today humanity is a unique organism, that is destroying itself by being harmed in conflicts.

Besides preaching about peace, Giordani was a man who practiced peace. Like in the early 1950’s, we remember him from the pages of the newspapers that he directed, dialoguing with representatives of the Communist world – such as Davide Lajolo of Milan, the director of *l’Unità*<sup>2</sup> –

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<sup>1</sup> IPP – Italian People’s Party

<sup>2</sup> L’Unità – Italian left-wing newspaper.

during the years in which communists were excommunicated by the Church. It was an initiative that raised quite a stir and some misunderstanding.

In 1945, at the end of World War II, it can also be recalled how Giordani did everything in his power to save some Fascist leaders from the lynching and the summary executions that ensued after the liberation even though he himself had suffered deprivation and the pains of ideological and cultural persecutions under the Fascist regime.

The first law on conscientious objection (1949) was his, presented together with the socialist Calosso. He was also among the first inspirers of the parliamentary support in favor of Peace together with members of parliament from different parties (1951).

**His idea of democracy** originated from the ethical content of human relationships, that is, from the recognition of each person's dignity and the respect for each person in determining the common good. In this sense, his democratic spirit is rooted in Christian inspiration. In some of his famous books like *Dehumanization* (1941), *Christian Pioneers of Democracy* (1950), and *The Two Cities* (1961), he emphasized how politics could be made into the highest organization of Christian love. That's not all. Well aware that politics is a field more exposed "*to corruption, lies and ambition*" than others, Giordani even wrote that "*power satanizes*" (1962). He cast this message which is more relevant than ever today: if we all need holiness, "*politicians, legislators, and public administrators need two helpings of it*" (1962).

**Political ideal of universal brotherhood** – After his exit from Parliament in 1953, Giordani left the politics of Palazzo Montecitorio in order to devote himself to the building of a new social and political culture, measured on a greater dimension: the human family. His meeting with Chiara Lubich (founder of the Focolare Movement) in September 1948 brought about a turning point in his life. He would say later on: "*All my studies, my ideals, and the very events in my life seemed to be directed towards this goal... I could say that before I was searching; now I have found.*"

He was fascinated by the evangelical radicalness of the "spirituality of communion" announced and lived out by Chiara. The new turning point in Giordani's life produced quite a profound change that – he wrote – "*it shocked my friends.*" His polemical temperament transformed and Giordani acquired a new and marked sensibility for deeper dialogue. His commitment as an individual became communitarian and it was welcomed by a multitude of politicians worldwide, starting from that small group of members of parliament which was formed in the 1950's and grew in time leading up to the establishment of the present Movement of Unity in Politics, founded by Chiara Lubich in 1996.

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