



**END OF YEAR MESSAGE FROM
H.R.H. VITTORIO EMANUELE
DUKE OF SAVOY
PRINCE OF NAPLES**

GENEVA - 31 DECEMBER 2020

Dear Italians,

the year that has just ended will remain indelibly etched in our minds and hearts. The pandemic, which hit our Country and the world like a storm, turned our lives upside down, struck our loved ones with ruthless coldness, confined us to our homes and caused a tsunami effect on the economy, sweeping away in few days the security of a globalized world that felt invincible.

It is hard to forget that column of Italian army lorries loaded with coffins in Bergamo: it was a sight that conjured up images of conflict that we never thought we would see at such a juncture.

And yet, alongside the horror and fear, as in the most difficult moments of our national history, we are experiencing a tragedy that has united us in grief, not divided us. We have so far faced this adversity with patriotic spirit, finally looking beyond factions and partisan interests.

Many Italians have perhaps rediscovered their love for their Country, the value of institutions and civic solidarity in a Country that certainly has no need to follow international models, since it can draw the necessary energy from its roots to continue to walk along the path of history.

The situation has become an opportunity: a moment to be united, and not "trampled and divided", nor condemned to be citizens of an unspecified "global village" where we would be mere *numbers* and not *Italians*, and that has shown its shortcomings in this year of 2020.

My thoughts and the affection of my House go to the victims of Covid-19, to their families and to all those who bravely remained at their posts: nurses, doctors, health workers, Armed Forces and Police Forces, priests, teachers, volunteers, carers and all those people who know the path of sacrifice for the good of the community.

The House of Savoy too, through its Dynastic Orders, has tried to make its own modest but important contribution to the fight against the virus and to respond to the social emergency triggered by the pandemic.

Another light illuminates our path: on 27 December last year, Italy, together with Europe, launched the largest vaccination campaign in living memory. The path to rebirth is appearing on the horizon. We know that our Armed Forces will play an important role in this campaign, organizing the necessary logistics.

Alongside a feeling of gratitude and respect for them that should always be alive in all our fellow citizens (and not only on this occasion), I must once again express my agreement with all those who, in recent years, have asked for our Armed Forces and, in particular, the Italian Army, to be enabled to operate with efficient means, making the most of a professionalism that is the envy of

the whole world. Often, mortifying cuts and unspeakable, albeit isolated, political outbursts have put this into question.

I believe that this could be a great opportunity for our Country to finally express its gratitude to our Armed Forces not only with words, but with concrete gestures.

In this regard, allow me to express my best wishes to the new Commander General of the glorious Arma dei Carabinieri, General Teo Luzi. The Carabinieri, who are the custodians of the glory of Pastrengo and of the sacrifice of Giovanni Battista Scapaccino and Salvo d'Acquisto, have always been in the heart of every member of the House of Savoy and always will be.

In the hectic moments of the pandemic, our Armed Forces, and in particular the Carabinieri with their stations located in every corner of the Country, were close to the elderly who could not go out shopping or collect their pensions, leaving no one alone and being the best reference point, the continuation of their family, for all those who needed it.

I welcome with joy the return home of our 18 fishermen from Mazara del Vallo, who are sons of our beautiful Sicily, which is so dear to me, in the hope that such incidents never happen again and that Italy returns to playing its role in the Mediterranean Sea to protect its citizens and its legitimate national interests in full respect of international law.

A few weeks from now, the 27 January will be the 20th anniversary of the death of my mother, H.M. Queen Maria José. In recent months, I have often thought about Her and Her courage in the face of all of life's adversities, thanks also to a book recently published by the Italian Red Cross and dedicated to her work as a volunteer nurse. There is a lot of talk about "resilience": I think that my mother lived most of her life with amazing resilience, especially during the Second World War. Above all, Maria José was able to help me understand the importance of a smile, which, together with irony, is always the best remedy for dealing with the difficulties, whether big or small, which we face every day.

My wish is therefore that the year 2021 may bring back to all of us and our loved ones the smile that the pandemic has taken away for just a few moments. And not forever.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Vittorio Emanuele". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.