

Global Ministries Award of Affirmation – July 10th

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am honored to receive this award today and I am proud to be here on the behalf of the Waldensian Church and the Mediterranean Hope project of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy.

The Waldensian Church is a small community in Italy. It dates back to the Middle Ages in France and then became part of the Reformed movement. This minority church has been repressed and persecuted but has remained committed to its faith.

Today we are an active and social conscious minority in contemporary Italian society, committed to cultural programs, ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, the safeguarding of creation, working for peace and justice, and hospitality of foreigners.

We are a small church, yes, but we are trying to do big projects for example through Mediterranean Hope.

We are based on the little island of Lampedusa, in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, where we are on the border every day, witnessing the injustice of our time.

Last year more than 180.000 of people have arrived on the Italian shores, including Lampedusa, and lots of them were children and unaccompanied minors.

The Mediterranean route is one of the most dangerous in the world. In the last 15 years more than 35.000 of people have died on seeking a better life.

But through Mediterranean Hope we are also helping thousands of migrants from Africa to reach Italy legally and safely through Humanitarian Corridors, instead of embarking on a potentially fatal journey across the Mediterranean. With the Humanitarian Corridors the people arrive in Italy with their luggage, it means with their stories, with their dignity as human beings.

As a social worker I can tell you that this is an hard job, but as a Christian I think we are called to feel uncomfortable sometimes, because discomfort is what calls us to create change.

All of these challenges have pushed us to be active and bear witness to our faith. And we are very grateful that our churches are international partners.

In a sense you are on the border with us, supporting us, advocating for us, praying for us.

Together, as churches that are able to read and understand the needs of our time, we are trying to break through the isolation and the discouragement, reminding one another what the Gospel teaches us and what we fight for.

I am proud to be part of our one and universal church, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Thank you.