

Welcome Manifesto

This is a church which welcomes...

- ◇ **“In as much as you have done this for one of the least of my brothers, you have done this for me.” (Matt. 25:40)**
God comes to us as a stranger: by pushing away those who seek our help we close the door to Jesus who looks for us and reaches out his hand to us.
- ◇ **“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matt. 25:35)**
We declare that faith in Christ commits us to welcoming those who knock at our door in search of help, protection and care.
- ◇ **“On the day that God created humankind, he did so in his own image.” (Gen. 5:1b)**
We affirm that every man, women and child is a creature of God, made in his own image and, therefore, that no one may be discriminated against on the basis of colour, religion or gender identity. Every form of racism is, for us, a theological heresy.
- ◇ **“Cursed is he who tramples on the rights of the foreigner.” (Deut. 27:19)**
We are called to defend the lives, dignity and rights of migrants, asylum seekers, Roma, ethnic and religious minorities, and all those who are persecuted and marginalised.
- ◇ **“There is neither Jew nor Greek...because you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28)**
The Gospel of Christ tears down ethnic differences and calls us to be a Church which is open to encounter and exchange, in which Italians and immigrants live the Christian faith together.
- ◇ **“A man came down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and was set upon by bandits who stripped him, beat him and then went off, leaving him half dead. [...] A Samaritan, on seeing him, had compassion for him; he went to him, bound his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them, put him on his own mount, took him to an inn and took care of him.” (Luke 10:30, 33-34)**
We value and support those who save the lives of migrants and victims of human trafficking, and those who guarantee humanitarian rescue both in the Mediterranean and in the Alpine passes.

...and so

- ◇ **We reject as false the assertion that welcoming migrants is at odds with meeting the needs of Italians**, because a country which is amongst the richest in the world has the resources to guarantee both and because we know that, in time, new immigrants will themselves constitute a resource for a country such as Italy which is in significant demographic decline.
- ◇ **We are committed to guaranteeing humanitarian corridors** for the benefit of asylum seekers which provide a safe and legal means for them to arrive in Europe. We do so ecumenically and always in accordance with European law.
- ◇ **We believe in the need to integrate** immigrants into a welcoming society, capable of promoting intercultural encounter and exchange according to the principles of the Italian Constitution.
- ◇ **We oppose the Italian and European policy of closing borders**, deportation and reducing guarantees of international protection for asylum seekers, all the more so when UN institutional sources attest to systematic violation of human rights in countries of departure and transit.
- ◇ **We ask all** – but most particularly those with institutional responsibilities – **to adopt language which respects the dignity of migrants** and to evidence in their actions their opposition to xenophobic and racist attitudes.
- ◇ **We denounce and criticise the political campaign against immigrants** and asylum seekers which, given reducing numbers of arrivals, perfectly sustainable within in a framework of European solidarity, serves only to exacerbate and sensationalise public debate.
- ◇ **We appeal to our sister churches in Europe because they too welcome a share of the world’s asylum seekers** and urge their governments to promote a policy of sharing migratory flows in a framework of solidarity and shared responsibility.

Remembering the words of the apostle: **“If I speak in the tongues of men and angels but have no love, I am but a clanging gong or a sounding cymbal.”** (1 Cor. 13:1), we affirm that the love of God for humanity is stronger than our personal or national self-interest and that we are called to witness to this every day with joy, hope and trust.

This “Welcome Manifesto” was approved on 8th August 2018 by the Council of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI).

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