

Rome, 9th January 2019

“The Waldensian Church, the first to devise and finance humanitarian corridors, will welcome the 15 (sic) Sea-Watch migrants (characterised as “tolerated”) at no cost to the Italian state. Heretics persecuted for centuries, today the Waldensians are vigilant witnesses to a humanity which we are at risk of losing. THANK YOU”

So tweeted Gad Lerner, a respected Italian journalist, this morning in response to the news that the FCEI (Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy), through its Mediterranean Hope programme and the Waldensian Diaconate, will be permitted to host and support ten of the migrants who have been stuck at sea for almost three weeks. The FCEI’s offer to look after the migrants was made last Friday in an effort to break the deadlock preventing two rescue boats from landing anywhere in Europe with their cargo of survivors.

Late yesterday, when it became clear that eight European member states would share responsibility for the 49 migrants, Malta permitted the boats to dock at last. Italy, which will bear no financial responsibility for its share of the migrants thanks to the support to be provided by the FCEI, is amongst the eight.



It is humbling to read comments made in response to Lerner’s tweet, which include “If I were not an atheist, I would be a Waldensian”, “I’ve given my 8/1,000 [tax allocation] to the Waldensian Church for years. I’ll keep doing so” and “They are applying the Gospel”.

Of course, not everyone is happy. Other tweets in response pour scorn on the efforts of the FCEI. Scathing posts with the Italian flag prominent denigrate migrants. This, sadly, is a barometer for the polarised society in which I live. It seems that now, more than ever, is a time to stand up for what you believe in.