GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR EVANGELIZATION

AN OPEN LETTER

To His Eminence Card. Angelo Bagnasco

President of the Italian Episcopal Conference

Circonvallazione Aurelia, 50

00165 Rome

Rome July 17, 2013

Your Eminence,

The offensive insults of the Senate’s vice-president, Roberto Calderoli, directed at the minister of integration, Cécile Kyenge, has wounded us deeply, as human beings and as missionaries. The racist words of the politician from the Northern League are not an isolated incident. Other racist comments have been directed at the minister by well-known and less known members of the national and local political scene. It is an unacceptable climate which is poisoning the peaceful coexistence of our country and fosters an atmosphere of suspicion and controversy, especially during these times of economic difficulties.

Pope Francis at Lampedusa spoke of hospitality and solidarity towards migrants and has begged for forgiveness: prophetic words and a prophetic sign meant to awaken our drowsy consciences over the plight of many of our brothers and sisters who are running away from famine, wars and dictatorial regimes supported by sympathetic governments of the North and by Western multinational corporations, who are abundantly rewarded by those rapacious governments.

The people of Lampedusa have offered an example of solidarity to the migrants, as Pope Francis recognized, just as thousands of Italian citizens are doing, who have not forgotten the virtues of tolerance and hospitality of the Italian people who, for centuries, were “migrants” and have known personally the scourge of racism, prejudice and exclusion.

Now, Your Eminence, we would like to see the Italian Church call to a sense of responsibility those politicians who have used racist words in order to gather approval and a low electoral gain; we would like to see the Italian Church to speak with one voice against this climate of hatred and suspicion which is poisoning the Italian political life and civil coexistence. We would like to see the Italian Church condemn and clearly raise its voice against an attitude which does not accept responsibility for its own actions, and that it be done today and concretely at this time when there are those who would like to look at an act of institutional responsibility as a simple incident along the way.

If not today, when?

This is our appeal to you, Your Eminence, and through you, to the entire Italian Episcopal Conference. We would like to see that the moral and cultural ‘regeneration’ (a term so dear to Saint Daniel Comboni when he was speaking of 19th century Africa) of Italy will find in you, our bishops, a sure, clear and strong guide.

The Comboni Missionaries:

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