



Your Holiness

We are here today, in front of you, with our eyes and heart full of emotion and hope: the same feelings we have seen on the faces of thousands of human beings who have come to our doorstep, who have set foot in our municipalities, islands, cities and border territories that we have the privilege and responsibility to administer. They are called migrants, irregular immigrants, displaced people, exiled, refugees: for us they are first and foremost human beings, people. But today we are not here only to tell you the stories of migration: we are here, Holy Father, also to bring you the greetings and the witness of the communities of the border territories, of the communities that have lived in the front line the impact of migration flows and have always had room for welcoming them, even at the cost of profound sacrifices and deprivation.

My name is Totò Martello, I am the Mayor of Lampedusa and Linosa. I know that Your Holiness well knows Lampedusa, a small island in the heart of the Mediterranean that may seem harsh, forged by nature in the face of adverse weather conditions, but it is also a place where man's ability to understand and to understand himself is assessed. Besieged by a historical phenomenon infinitely greater than us, we discover that we are not afraid of the vastness of the sea that separates us from every mainland but rather the vastness of silence and indifference.

Today I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European project "**Snapshots from the Borders**" of which Lampedusa and Linosa Municipality is the leading partner and that brings together a large partnership made of border towns and islands from 13 European countries and civil society organizations. Because it is above all in the border territories that in these years there have been infinite deaths and unprecedented emergencies and aloneness, but also generous impetus of humanity and reasons for hope, and that live more intensely the impact of people's migrations.

By the "Snapshots from the Borders" Project, we have launched a campaign by which **we call for the establishment of October 3rd**, the dreadful date that marked in 2013 the most dramatic sinking of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, a few miles away from Lampedusa, as "**European Day of Remembrance for Migration Victims**" and for which we dare to humbly ask Your Holiness' support.

Moreover, we intend to organize in Lampedusa an international conference on the Peace in the Mediterranean to put forward a renewed approach to the issue of migration flows and to ensure that the tragedy of migrants is no longer used, as all too often unfortunately happens, to fuel fears and social divides, which generate hatred and wickedness.

From this point of view, the appeals of yours, Holy Father, take on even greater value today, because we cannot and must not allow the Coronavirus Pandemic, which has profoundly affected the lives of all of us, to be used as an instrumental argument to further divide our society.

Along the course of our Project I have launched a slogan, "**I am a Fisherman**", with the intention of reminding us that there cannot be barriers for seafarers. At sea, those who risk their lives are saved, and this has been the case for thousands of years. All of us here today are proud to be "fishermen in our hearts and minds" and grateful to you, Holy Father, for giving us this unforgettable opportunity to share our small contribution to a great story.