

Milan, 24 April 2013

**To the distinguished Organizers of the International Roncalli Committee
BCC: International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation**

Association *Gariwo, the forest of the Righteous*, in 2012 achieved a great result at the European Parliament: the approval of its proposal to establish the "European day of the Righteous" to remember on 6 March of every year the value of all the people who have committed themselves to defending human dignity, rescuing the persecuted, reporting the crimes perpetrated during the Holocaust and all other genocide cases.

This is why Gariwo is happy to announce that it will commit itself to making all European citizens aware of the great moral example set by Pope John XXIII who under Nazi rule, in his capacity as an apostolic nuncio in Istanbul, accomplished important steps forward to help the Jewish populations such as by intervening by the Slovakian government to allow the exodus of the Jewish children, by stepping in to help Jewish refugees reach Palestine and by his constant pleadings to his elders in the Vatican to aid the Jews in various countries. Commemorations will take place during the celebrations of the European day of the Righteous.

In particular Angelo Roncalli, confronted with the persecution of the Bulgarian Jews, made sure the expression of his dissent reached even King Boris - as strongly did in Sofia the chiefs of the Orthodox church Stefan and Kiril, who openly spoke for the rescue of Jews - which shows how important the role of the religious institution can be in face of extreme evil.

The story of the man who would later become a Pope shows the great role that the Leaders of all religious confessions can play in the face of the worst crimes against humanity, when they have the courage and the moral resolve to speak out. Unfortunately this moral voice has not always been raised and many chiefs of various Churches and Confessions have been unable to spark a light in the faithful's conscience.

The rescue of the Bulgarian Jews is a great example for the entire Europe and shows a way of a possible cooperation between the authorities of the different faiths in genocide prevention.

This is the aim with which Gariwo will suggest to honour the figure of John XXIII in the Gardens of the Righteous, from Milan to the rest of Italy - together with the most significant figures of all religions.

Gabriele Nissim
Chairman *Gariwo, the forest of the Righteous*