

**Address by the Ambassador Gianluigi Benedetti  
on the occasion of the Ceremony of decoration to Jewish Rescuers  
by the Committee to Recognize the Heroism of Jews who Rescued Fellow Jews  
during the Holocaust  
Italian Temple, Jerusalem – November 26, 2019**

Distinguished guests, dear friends,

I am pleased and honored to be here with you today to take part to the Ceremony of Decoration to Jewish Rescuers presented by the *Committee to Recognize the Heroism of Jews who Rescued Fellow Jews during the Holocaust*, coordinated by *B'nai Brith International*.

The stories and the heroes we remember today belong to the memory not only of the Italian Jewish Community, but they are part of the history itself of Italy and I'm very proud to contribute to keep their memory alive by participating to this very meaningful event.

Rav Nathan Cassuto, chief rabbi of Florence and head of the Jewish Resistance Movement in Tuscany during the Holocaust, and Matilda Cassin, one of the leaders of the Resistance movement in Florence were part of an heroic network dedicated to the rescue of hundreds of Florentine Jews in the tragic years of World War 2.

We have already had the opportunity to commemorate this unique example of Jewish-Christian (and not only Catholic) solidarity with important events in the past years, lately last year on the occasion of the presentation of the Honorary Citizenship of Israel to Gino Bartali, who participated to the same operations in Florence together with personalities of huge historical and human stature such as Cardinal Elia Dalla Costa.

But tonight's occasion is really special because, thanks to the activity of the Committee and of B'nai Brith International, we can focus the recognition of heroism not only on non-Jewish rescuers but also on the many Jewish who put in danger their lives in order to save their fellow Jews from concentration camps and sure death.

It is time to correct the common misconception that Jews didn't significantly help rescue other Jews during the Holocaust, and tonight's ceremony in honor of Nathan Cassuto and Matilde Cassin is an important and decisive step on this path.

So thank you very much to Hevrat Yehude Italia Be Israel for hosting this event tonight, thank you all again for inviting me, thank you to Mr Aher Vardi, the son of Matilde Cassin and to Prof. David Cassuto, the son of Nathan Cassuto for being with us tonight, Italy is very proud of the example of your parents, their actions were lights in the darkness and a will never be forgotten.

Todà Rabà.