**August 2016**

In August everyone abandons Milan. It’s really quiet, there is little traffic and many shops are closed. These conditions mitigated against us meeting our first priority: purchasing an electric kettle.

Wandering the deserted streets I struggled to explain our predicament to the remnant of shopkeepers. I waved my arms, used various hand gestures and to my frustration-when I was understood- they informed me that they did not sell "bollitore elettrico."

The first few days were tough. I would love to tell you that I had remembered to bring tea bags with me-that I had found acceptable teabags here. It just wasn't to be. I'm afraid that in the end I contemplated something quite unthinkable. In my despair I decided I would purchase a coffee machine.

It’s in these moments that we realise who we really are.

As I ventured out into the unknown I noticed that the streets were not entirely deserted. On closer inspection I realised that, aside from the tourists, there were all kinds of non-Italian people trying to make money in a variety of informal ways.

At the supermarket there was a man returning trolleys for people (so he could have the coin). Another stood at the door offering to help people carry their shopping. At the traffic lights a lady tried to clean people’s windscreens. Basically, wherever there was any possibility (however small) of making some money, someone was there.

As I approached the supermarket, the biggest shop I could find open, I asked the man who was informally collecting trollys if they sold "macchina per il caffè" here. "Non Italiano" he replied. "Where are you from?" I asked. "I'm from Nigeria" he said. "Oh, ok, erm...you don't happen to know where I can buy a kettle do you...and some Yorkshire tea bags?" He smiled and said "Yes. Are you a British man? They sell *Darlington* Tea bags down there." Its close enough I suppose -still it’s quite amazing how God answers prayer!

Now its September the residents of Milan have all returned. Shops are open, it’s busy, and the traffic is heavy. The news here is filled with reports about Migrants who, being unable to get to other countries, are struggling to survive in Milan.

As countries to the north have closed their borders, migrants wanting to travel to Germany are now stuck in northern Italy. The numbers increase daily (more than 13000 arrived in Italy this week) and headlines in some of the papers suggest that local residents are becoming extremely frustrated.

On Sundays the church here takes breakfast to the many people sleeping rough near the central station. At the moment its really hot (even at night), but when it gets colder (and it will) the challenges facing these amazing people - people who have risked everything in search of a better life-will increase considerably.

Please pray for the Migrants, that God would provide a place for them to flourish.

Please Pray for all the people affected by the Earthquake.

Please Pray for us, that God will help each of us to integrate and learn Italian and that we will relate well to All.

P.s A Link to welcome service:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfMaZw_V-k0&sns=em>

<http://www.thelocal.it/20160722/italy-fears-calais-style-migrant-camps>

