World Student Christian Federation

On 6th April 2015, Rev. Dr. Caterina Dupre’ passed away at the age of 44 after a cruel illness. Caterina was Vice-chair of WSCF from 2000-2004. An ordained Pastor in the Waldensian Church of Italy, Caterina had been Director of the Agape Ecumenical Centre since 2009.

Caterina studied theology at the Waldensian Faculty in Rome, where she became an active member of the FGEI (the Italian affiliate of WSCF). A year of studies in Russia kindled a lifelong interest in the theology and spirituality of the Orthodox Church, an interest she pursued with further studies at St Vladimir’s Seminary in New York. Caterina was ordained as a Waldensian Pastor in 2001.

Caterina became involved in the life of the WSCF at both European and global levels, where she made a unique and important contribution. Like so many Waldensians before her, Caterina held a theological worldview grounded in social justice, liberation and respect for human dignity, while her own spiritual practice drew deeply from a wider well-spring of Christian tradition.

In the decade following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the ecumenical movement in Europe faced a new and sometimes challenging reality as communication opened up across the continent. Caterina’s affinity with Orthodox spirituality and her knowledge of that tradition were invaluable assets to WSCF in those days as Europe changed around us, and her ability to build relationships, embrace differences, and see the best in everybody were great and indispensable virtues.

Caterina never paraded her intellectual prowess, but she was an original and profound theologian who throughout her life and work, sought to live her beliefs. During her time with the community at Agape she strengthened the international dimensions of the programme, and the links to the wider ecumenical movement, encouraging action and reflection on some of the biggest social issues of our time, like inequality and climate change.
Perhaps, though, Caterina’s greatest gift was her human empathy, her ability to mediate, and her instinctive embrace of pluralism and diversity. Those of us fortunate enough to have known Caterina personally have lost a dear, wise and loyal friend. She will be remembered with the greatest affection for her wisdom and grace, and we give thanks for her life and the time we shared with her.

Caterina is survived by her husband, Pastor Vito Gardiol, her mother Annemarie von Hammerstein, her siblings, Eugenio and Cecilia, and their respective families, all of whom have our deepest condolences.

Tribute Written by:
Eilidh Whiteford
WSCF Vice-chairperson (2004-2008)