



Press Release no.5 – 9 August 2012

“Let’s bridge”

The meaning of launching bridges and weaving relationships with others. To overcome barriers that divide.

*There are many different activities that the youth are carrying out,
a section of which will be illustrated at the Genfest 2012
(Budapest 31 August-2 September).*

Monitoring and promotion of fraternity under way, through the United World Project.

The 12,000 young people of a hundred countries who will be present at the appointment in Budapest (31/8 – 2/9), represent the tens of thousands of their contemporaries in the world who share the ideal of fraternity.

At the Genfest there will also be a moment of exchanging concrete experiences which will show that they have been in action for years. Economy, art, social problems, intercultural dialogue: their “bridges”, upheld by personal and group stories: diversified and consolidated throughout the world. Bridges between individuals, groups and peoples.

United world, fraternity: abstract words? – The meaning of working in such a committing workshop is explained by some of them through daily events. Z., a Syrian, is a soldier and from March he has to care for the new recruits. One of his tasks is to go to the families of the soldiers who have been killed to give them the news of the death. They are dramatic moments in which he tries to live with them. He recounts that once a colleague had to go and fetch the new recruits in a city far away, with the danger of being attacked along the way: he was afraid. Youcef offered to go in his place and at the last moment the management decided to send him by plane. “Do to others what you would like to be done to you - continues [Gergely](#), a 26-year-old Hungarian – This phrase, that everyone understands, independently from their culture and religion, often guides me in my daily life.”

Humanitarian emergencies, caused by catastrophes, natural disasters or conflicts, finds the young people in the front line: the floods in [Liguria](#) (Italy), the exodus of the Iraqi refugees in Jordan, the earthquake in [Fukushima](#) and in Chile.

One experience among many is that of the young people in [Colombia](#), where the rain hasn’t let up for more than a year, with over 500 people who have died and gone missing and nearly 3 million people who have suffered damages.

They started from Soacha, a city on the outskirts of Bogotá and together with the adults they organized a campaign to collect supplies and clothing. They also received 200 pairs of boots and a quantity of food that they distributed to the families most in need. Today the situation has worsened, because of illnesses and problems of living together in the camping grounds. They continue to collect supplies and stay close to the people.

Going back to Syria during these last months: the young people of Aleppo have organized themselves to distribute free meals to the poor families, which they obtain from a big company. Thanks to a communion of goods among friends and relatives, they regularly have the necessary food. This is what they also did in Damascus when, last July, the refugees poured into the gardens and schools of the city. Then, with a debate after a film as well as other meetings they tried to spread the culture of peace and brotherhood.

The young people of Cairo, protagonists of the project “I belong” will speak on the stage at Budapest.

The challenge of diversity – Buddhist and Christian young people have held 3 [symposiums](#) to share one another's thoughts and experiences regarding topics like commitment for peace and living and transmitting Faith, thus creating a network of friendship and interreligious, intercultural and international fraternity.

72 Muslims and Christians of 5 countries of the Middle East and North Africa will meet for the first time in Budapest and, in record time, they have to put together the choreography that the groups have learnt in their respective countries, thanks to the virtual lessons passed around from one country to the other via youtube. The same with the youth of India: Hindus of the Ghandian Shanti Ashram Movement and Christians have worked together for months on their dance, which wants to express the diversity of religions and castes present in their country, in a classical Indian style.

These are only some of the multiple experiences of interreligious dialogue that the youth live out. Num, a Buddhist girl from Thailand will speak about it on September 1st at the Genfest, while a Christian from Nazareth and a Muslim from Jerusalem will tell the 12,000 young people present what it means to live for fraternity in the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and of the difficulty of living together for three religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Among them there are also [young people who don't have a religious belief](#), but who share the commitment to live for a united world.

But each of them is in the front row, there, where they live, with the problems and challenges they face every day.

Santiago (Chile): there were 100 young people involved in the Christmas activity "[Navidad en la calle](#)" that they have been carrying out for some years now, with the tramps of the Yungay and Brasile neighbourhoods of the city. Setting the tables, personalized gifts, the service cared for in the finest details... every little thing was thought of so that they are treated as equals, giving dignity back to these brothers and sisters.

Catania-Bujumbura: the bridge between the young people of these two cities was materialized in a keyboard. From a Skype video-call in which the African band "Gen Sorriso/Smile" (who will perform also in Budapest) sang in kirundi, the "Galilei" High School youth of Catania came up with the idea of offering them a keyboard. In order to accomplish this they launched the operation "An ice-cream for Burundi." In the following link-up, an intercontinental virtual concert with drums and guitar (in Burundi) and the keyboard, that for now is still in Catania, but is destined for Burundi's band.

The [United World Project](#), conceived and developed by the youth of the Focolare Movement and open to everyone's collaboration, which will be launched in its first phase in Budapest, aims to highlight and promote fraternity already under way by individuals, groups and nations. It will also start up a permanent international Observatory, recognized by the UN.

M.Laura Hernández cell. + 39 349 8745287

Umberta Fabris cell. +39 348 8563347

Benjamim Ferreira cell. +39 348 4754063

tel.: +39 06 947989

fax: +39 06 96708638

email: press@genfest.org

@GenfestPress_it

genfestpress.tumblr.com

www.genfest.org/pressindex



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