

Press Release – May 11, 2015

## United World Week and Run4Unity

Youth and children. Knots in a global net demonstrate the duty to promote peace.

A ten-day worldwide initiative aims at creating awareness about the daily effort to build peace. Focolare Youth and children and their many friends. Signs of persistent commitment towards peace in the whole world. A focus on some initiatives, not amongst the most crowded or those held in well-known cities, but very significant because they show that everyone, anywhere can contribute towards peace.

**Kinshasa, Congo.** A convinced crowd of a thousand young people, Christians and Muslims demonstrated in front of civil authorities: mayors, governor, members of parliament, ambassadors. (One boy managed to invite 70 friends who took part in the activity and paid their participation fee in advance). These youngsters marched for about an hour in the chaotic city of Kinshasa until they reached *Petite Flamme*, the school run by the Focolare Movement and found in Ndolo. This project offers many teens the opportunity to build a future in their own country without having to emigrate. Other young people marched in the unstable east region of Bukavu, Kikwit and Goma.

**Damascus, Syria.** Syrian children have been asked to comment on their situation and answered through social networks: *"I am M., and after managing to escape from home I now live in Damascus. During the night our neighbourhood was very heavily bombarded and rockets hit some of our friends' homes. The Focolare families did their best to find accommodation for them....Some of us lost relatives, friends, school.... But in spite of all this we believe in peace, we live for peace and pray God for peace. We visited children in an orphanage. We organized ourselves and prepared for them sweets, salted biscuits, bracelets... We played with these children and spent a very nice day together"*. Another group of 65 youngsters, coming from different parts of the country, faced the risk of a journey to spend a couple of days together: *"It seemed an oasis as it was for the people of Israel who for 40 years journeyed in the desert amidst many hardships"*.

**Cascais, Portugal.** 900 young Portuguese gathered at the Citadel of Cascais welcomed the Syrian youth's commitment to pray and be points of reference for peace in everyday life so as to spread love and peace around them. *"They instilled strength and determination in us, helping us to give relative importance to our small difficulties and challenges"*. The commissioner for youth policies encouraged them saying: *"Continue to believe in what already believe. Continue to be what you are. The world needs you!"*

**Bahía Blanca, Argentina.** Through the initiative "Papelitos in the city", positive messages were scattered everywhere: on school benches, doors, in elevators, in mailboxes, on motorcycles, cars, bicycles.... The golden rule found in sacred books and in other texts stimulated the idea: *"Cheer up everybody's day and contribute to lessen violence"*. Other groups (scouts, etc.) took part in this initiative through Whatsapp and Facebook. It has also aroused conflicting ideas that reinforced the youth's determination to *"write those words with their lives"*.

**Hamm, Germany.** Catholic and Evangelical youth walked together through the city and stopped at various places of worship, including a mosque and Hindu temple.

**Slovakia.** Slovak and Ukrainian youth and children met at a town on the border between the two countries and organized different activities. Above all, they shared the suffering of a conflict that continues to cause death and destruction.

**Hong Kong and Macao:** The necessity of peace and its absolute priority were promoted in one of the busiest commercial places in Hong Kong, which youth chose as their meeting place.

**Bethlehem.** Christian and Muslim children from Jerusalem, Nazareth and Haifa, who took part in this year's edition of the relay race for peace, met at the Square of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. From there they walked to the Salesian monastery in the Cremisan Valley, where the local people protested without any violence and prevented the building of a part of the wall that separates Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

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