

Promoting Peace and Fraternity through the field of Education

“Learning Fraternity”: stories and perspectives that fill one with hope

10 points to form “people-world” in the era of globalization

“Yes, one can learn to walk in the pathways of peace!” And we are already experiencing this as witnesses and protagonists in educational relationship, interpreted and lived in its widest sense”.

This was the response at the end of two very intensive days by the 650 educators participating in Learning Fraternity, a conference-workshop held at a dramatic moment, but when the world is raising its voice to ask wholeheartedly that the logic of peace and reconciliation prevails on the one of violence and war.

Education is a privileged pathway in the search for peace: it enters into the root of the problem and looks at man as a whole. This was certainly the reason for bringing together families and schools, group leaders and academics in the field of pedagogy, young people and also very very young ones from different cultural contexts, who brought with them the fruit of years of work in the 35 different countries from which they came. They shared experiences, initiatives, projects; and the 20 national and local stands together with the 35 workshops offered a very rich cross-section of their work.

A few examples:

The Santa Maria School in the North East of Brazil has been promoting a culture of peace since its very beginning, more than 40 years ago. It uses the *art of loving* proposed by Chiara Lubich as a methodological basis. A multidisciplinary team developed a teaching methodology that was tested in two pilot schools. A total of 1800 students were involved in this project and positive results in the behaviour of students were registered. The school in Recife is one of the 22 schools run by the Focolare Movement in 18 different countries. Some of these schools are found in places like Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Croatia and Slovenia.

Students in hundreds of classes start their day at school by throwing the “cube of love”. Each face of this cube promotes love to be given gratuitously to all without any discrimination, while one is the first to love.

The development of the project “Strong but not violent” is the collaborative work of the association Starkmacher, the international band Gen Rosso, the Caritas of Cologne and the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Schools in Germany, social institutions for youth at risk, immigrants, prisons and orphanages adhere to this project, which involves more than 25,000 young people.

In a videotaped message, Maria Voce described the prototype of fraternity building as *“a person who is a brother to everyone, who understands the ones near to him and who shares in the sufferings and joys of anyone. He is a person who knows how to combine the global with the local”* while taking action *“in favour of those who are near with a heart open to all the needs of humanity”*. Speaking about facing the tragedies and hopes of today’s world, she said: *“The task faced by those who want to achieve fraternity, is to transform this world, where diversities give rise to distrust, enmity, rivalry, war and strife, into a training ground for fraternal life.”*

All those who participated in Learning Fraternity adhered to the “educational pact”, which outlined a methodology in 10 points. These include: “learning together to teach together”; “accepting conflict and personal, relational, cultural and social limits to make out of them an opportunity for growth and dialogue, where one is always ready to start again”; “forming ‘people-world’ who believe in solidarity, in the culture of giving, in reciprocity as the basis of relationships”.

This is the road one has to pursue.

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