

Sant'Egidio Meeting in Paris: A Platform for Peace and Dialogue

The Sant'Egidio Meeting for Peace, held in Paris this year from 22nd-24th September, brought together global leaders, scholars, and religious figures to discuss paths towards peaceful coexistence. Central to this year's discussions was the relationship between interreligious dialogue and global challenges, with particular emphasis on Asia, explored in Forum 9, "The Great Asia: A Challenge for Religions."

Rita Moussalem and Antonio Salimbeni represented the Focolare Movement at the Meeting. We caught up with Antonio:

Could you share one or two key impressions from your participation in the Sant'Egidio meeting for Peace in Paris?

- I was deeply impressed by the broad participation of representatives from different religions and spiritual traditions from all over the world, accompanied by numerous representatives of various Churches. This generated a rich communion of ideas, perspectives and experiences on the theme of peace, approached from different angles and explored through multiple themes. This exchange concretely demonstrated what was reiterated several times during the conference: diversity, and therefore the other, is a precious resource, not a threat.
- We discussed fraternity and a humanism for the future. I would like to underline the importance of events like this, which offer society a concrete testimony of the possibility and urgency of dialogue with a new language, a language that affirms peace as the fruit of recognizing the other as a brother or sister, members of the same human family.

Were there any particular discussions or insights shared from Forum 9 on "The Great Asia: A Challenge for Religions" that you found especially impactful or thought-provoking?

In this Forum, the diversity of the various religious expressions emerged, united by a way of communicating typical of Asian culture, more oriented towards the concrete challenges of the present: from humanitarian crises to the environmental emergency, from widespread social inequalities to the increase in loneliness. The interventions highlighted the need not only for practical responses, but also for a new level of harmonization between religions. In this sense, Asia, with its extraordinary religious plurality, is configured as a true laboratory of interreligious dialogue. A dialogue not between religions, but between people of different faiths, based on mutual listening, empathy and respect for differences.

How did Pope Francis' message of dialogue and peace resonate with the discussions?

The Pope's message, read during the closing ceremony of the conference, was the perfect

synthesis of what emerged in the various organized forums. Although they addressed different issues, they all had as a common denominator the yearning for peace shared by all those present.

His words deeply touched me: '... Men and women of different cultures and faiths, you have experienced the strength and beauty of universal brotherhood. This is the vision that the world needs today. I urge you to continue: be artisans of peace. If many continue to wage war, we can all work for peace.' I believe that many of us returned from the conference with a renewed drive to do more for peace, to become active builders of that brotherhood that we dream of, asking ourselves if we are really doing enough."

The Focolare Movement, founded by Chiara Lubich, shares many common values with the Sant'Egidio community, including a commitment to unity, dialogue, and peace. Both movements have long believed in the power of interreligious dialogue to transform societies, advocating for peaceful coexistence between people of different faiths. This shared vision was underscored during the Paris meeting, as speakers from various faiths expressed the need for collaborative action in the face of global conflicts. The Paris meeting concluded with a renewed commitment to peacebuilding, with participants acknowledging that while much has been achieved, much more work remains. Both the Sant'Egidio and Focolare movements continue to play vital roles in fostering dialogue and building bridges between divided communities, demonstrating that faith-based action can contribute significantly to the peace process in a fractured world.