

Dossier – June 26, 2018

GENFEST 2018: “BEYOND ALL BORDERS”

Topics, Spaces for Reflection, dialogue and action

Main theme: Borders

The 11th edition of the Genfest, the world youth meeting promoted by the Focolare Movement, to be held in Manila, the Philippines from 6 to 8 July is dedicated to borders; not only geographical borders, but also and above all to social and cultural, personal and subjective ones, that limit and hinder authentic encounters, understanding of social phenomena and individual realities and relationships that build solidarity and brotherhood.

So “Beyond all borders”, the theme of this event is an invitation to overcome the barriers that arise from selfishness and prejudice, superficiality and indifference, fear and misinformation; it is an invitation addressed to each individual, because a more united world can be built only through the change of individuals, who are able to open mind and heart to global visions and challenges, to an idea of well-being, development and progress that is inclusive, participatory and respectful of diversity and particular realities.

The youth will be offered quite a demanding task. Over 6 thousand of them, aged from 18 to 30 years, are expected to be in the capital of the Philippines, while many others will follow the event via satellite or via internet, and quite a number are involved in the 23 local editions of the Genfest. The common desire to build a more united and supportive world is bringing together young people from all over the world, from different cultures, traditions, ethnic groups, religious beliefs and different political convictions.

The Genfest, a laboratory of unity

The task implies responsibility; the three-day Manila experience is expected to stimulate change in the personal life of the participants, their countries, their families, their groups and institutions. The Genfest aims at being a laboratory of unity, a school of fraternity that can influence society at all levels.

The novelties of the Genfest: “Get your hands dirty”

This 11th edition of Genfest, an event that was started in 1973, stemmed from an intuition of Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement. It is the first time that the Genfest will be held outside Europe. The young people are being invited not only to discuss ideas and share experiences but also to “get their hands dirty” by contributing to build fragments of unity in some places in Manila where pain and suffering are present.

The **programme** at Manila's World Trade Centre is scheduled to consist of music, songs, exhibitions and artistic performances alternated with life experiences of young people who are committed to contribute towards peace and unity in different contexts and challenging situations: on the border between Mexico and United States; at places in Africa and the Middle East that suffer because of conflicts; along the roads of forced migration, refugee camps and localities where immigrants land; in the Western world fragmented and confused by individualism, fear of diversity and the 'throwaway culture'; in the world of politics and economics, so that these can make the paradigm of fraternity their own.

There will be **110 forums** on topics that deal with building open and supportive societies: from urban cleaning techniques and care of environment to social enterprise forms, from personal and political conflict management to the use of social media for peace, and so on. The young people will be able to participate in any of the **8 workshops** on politics and economics, peace and human rights, sociology and dialogue, ecology and sport, communication, art and architecture.

Then there will also be space for the activity "**Hands for Humanity**": 12 different initiatives of solidarity, encounter and urban redevelopment organized in different parts of Manila, that give one the opportunity to experience change brought by small gestures and also discover ideas, projects, means and initiatives that can be repeated in one's own country.

There will also be **Explo**, an interactive exhibition that gets its name from "Exposition" and "Exploration". This will relate the history of humanity from the perspective of universal fraternity, highlighting the progress humanity made towards peace and friendship among individuals, peoples and cultures.

Maria Voce and Jesús Morán, president and co-president of the Focolare Movement will conclude the event.

Main objectives of Genfest 2018:

- ✓ Show that the unity of the human family is possible at all levels and all latitudes, among different peoples and groups, among generations, in neighbourhoods, and also among nations and in individual families.
- ✓ Propose lifestyles that promote solidarity for a more equitable and sustainable society.
- ✓ Facilitate actions and exchange of best practices at local, national and regional level, generate projects, share experiences.
- ✓ Expand a worldwide network of people who want to build peace.
- ✓ Create material for social networks to promote the importance of a united world;
- ✓ Promote active citizenship and help participants be more aware of their power to influence political decision-making.