

## Genfest, the world meeting of Focolare youth. Story, goals and perspectives

### Genfest 2024: an immersive experience, more than an event.

The 2024 version entitled, "Juntos para cuidar" (Together to care) will take place in Brazil. The participants will move from place to place, within an overall programme in three phases. The main event will be at the National Shrine of Aparecida (SP)

**Origins** - The Genfest was an inspiration of Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement, which is now present in 200 countries throughout the world. Genfest began in 1973 at the international little town of Loppiano, near Florence (Italy). About eight thousand young people from all over Europe took part, from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious roots. This first event was called: "The Global Person beyond every barrier". Right from the start the objective was to bring about a more united and fraternal world, and it already had the shape of what it became: an important international event which aims to showcase the presence of young people in many countries who believe in, and work for, universal fraternity.

At various dates during the last 50 years, it has brought together thousands of young people from all continents. Their ages range from 18 to 30, of different nationalities, ethnic groups, cultures, and religious beliefs, with the common purpose of building a united world. Genfest is a test bench and laboratory for the many ways of caring for people, the planet, and for society that can be carried forward in different cultural contexts and geographical areas. At its centre is love for one another, an outlook that sees each person as a brother or sister. This is the "law" rooted in the Gospel, inspiring and drawing everyone towards fraternity. With a broad and intergenerational objective, Genfest attempts to speak to the present epoch, its tragedies and the needs of its peoples and the planet.

**From a world at war to a world united: the objective of Genfest** - "Today, it seems that we have never been further from any semblance of unity between persons, people and cultures", one of the organisers said. Genfest will take place in Brazil, a greatly polarised country, in a Latin American context with increasing social inequality, inflation, and economic migration: in a world where, each day, wars reach horrific new levels, and national economies thrive on them. But this will not stop us. Unlike the past, we now have the means for our divided, diverse peoples to see one another, to speak, to contaminate each other in a positive way. Along with tragic contradictions and technology, the mobility of human society has made geopolitical barriers obsolete, facilitating encounters between people and diversities. Here lies the challenge that we would like to take up and pass on: to make diversities into points of strength. We do not believe in the clash of civilisations, rather in its opposite. We work so that persons, peoples, can look one another in the face, recognise mutual values, form networks, without giving up their own identity."

### What does "unity" mean today?

It means being united as the manifold variety of peoples that inhabit the earth, each with its own traditions and sensitivities. It means being united in a peaceful and secure coexistence of various religions and with diverse political ideals. It means being united in the commitment to care for the most vulnerable, from all peoples, ethnic roots and whatever their situation may be. It means being united on the way of encounter, the acceptance of alliances, and journeying on the pathway of dialogue and participation

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