



‘Let us continue to be builders of peace, tireless in our commitment to reconciliation and fraternity’.

01.10.2024 | Sant'Egidio

24.09.2024 - The closing ceremony of the event “Imagine Peace” was held in the historic square of Notre Dame, a gathering that brought together thousands of women and men of different religions and cultures, for three days in Paris, with the aim of imagining and building a more peaceful and just world. The choice of Notre-Dame as the venue was particularly significant: after the terrible fire that hit the cathedral, today the ancient church, which is about to reopen, represents a sign of hope.

Msgr. Laurent Ulrich, Archbishop of Paris, opened the ceremony, emphasising how Paris, "a city that has also, throughout its history, witnessed conversations that led to peace agreements and memorable declarations," can once again be a place of hope and reconciliation. Ulrich recalled that dialogue between religions is crucial to overcome differences and build bridges that can sustain a peaceful future

Gilberte Fournier's testimony was moving. Born in 1931, Fournier recounted her experience during World War II in Paris, recalling the most dramatic moments of her childhood. *‘I am speaking today at the invitation of my friends from Sant'Egidio, because there are fewer and fewer of us from my generation who can testify to the great evil that is war. However, we must not forget it. I want to say this especially to the younger generations: war destroys everything. War destroys lives, like those of many of my little friends from my street, rue Saint Martin, or the neighbourhood, who were forced to wear the yellow star and whom I have never seen again.’* she continued, emphasising the importance of not forgetting the horrors of the past. Gilberte then made a heartfelt appeal to the younger generation to treasure the memory of their elderly and commit themselves to peace. *‘Do not let yourselves be convinced that war is inevitable, but keep and nurture the peace that my generation imagined after the war,’* she said, highlighting the passing of the baton of peace to the new generations.

Pope Francis' message, a strong call to perseverance and commitment for peace, was read out at the opening of the ceremony. Pope Francis recalled how *‘Thirty-eight years have passed since 1986, when the first Meeting for Peace was held. Many events have impacted our world since that time: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the beginning of the Third Millennium, the spread of fundamentalist ideologies and the outbreak of conflicts with global repercussions, to say nothing of the challenges posed by climate change, the advent of emerging and converging technologies, and the pandemics that have affected humanity. Truly, we are in the midst of “epochal changes” without having, at present, a clear idea of where they will lead us.’* The Pontiff, recalling the Encyclical Fratelli Tutti, urged 'everyone to “contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society.” The Pope also stressed that working for peace is not an easy task, but that *‘the efforts made by believers are invaluable for holding out visions of peace and fostering fraternity and peace among peoples everywhere.’*

The Pope thanked the participants in the Meeting and encouraged them *‘to persevere in their efforts to be artisans of peace. If others continue to make war, together we can work for peace.’* ([Read more](#))

The Appeal for Peace, delivered by the children to the religious leaders, recalled *'the widespread spirit of resignation concerning ongoing conflicts, which risk escalation into a larger and more overwhelming war'*. There was strong concern about *'the risk of conveying to the younger generations a world of warfare, scarred by terrorism and violence. We run the risk of passing on to them the rehabilitation of war, as a tool for resolving conflicts or enforcing one's own interests'*. ([Read more](#))

The event concluded with a speech by **Marco Impagliazzo**, President of the Community of Sant'Egidio. He thanked all the participants for joining the forums and sharing reflections during the three-day event, because peace requires the courage to imagine it. Impagliazzo considered today a loud cry of protest: *'A cry of resistance in the face of war and so much violence. It means protesting in front of the world for all the dead (the majority being innocent victims). We protest against all this violence, all this hatred, that we regard as alien to our dream to live in peace, to the dream of so many men and women.'* ([Read more](#))

The younger generation must be able to receive the gift of peace. The many young people present in the square are testimony that it is possible to transmit the dream of peace from one generation to the next, as heard in the testimony of Gilberte Fournier. Impagliazzo recalled how peace is an idea that must be continuously built through encounter and dialogue. *'Here we imagined the return of peace in these times of wars. Together we can use our creative imagination to overcome the dark clouds of the present and to prepare for the future.'* he continued, emphasising the urgency of building human relations based on inclusion and mutual understanding.

Next year in Rome! Marco Impagliazzo concluded his message with this invitation, welcomed by enthusiastic and convinced applause.

The journey of Peace moves on.

Source: [Sant'Egidio](#), International Meetings for Peace, September 24, 2024.