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**Dialogue,
condition for peace**

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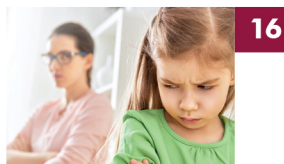
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Dossier



02


Editorial

A truly new road

A real challenge in our contemporary world is undoubtedly that of dialogue. We often witness heated confrontations that are more akin to clashes than to real exchanges of ideas. In the political dispute there are increasingly aggressive tones and a lexicon far from elegant and diplomatic forms. Paradoxically, even in upholding a principle of non-violence, we come across aggressive and disrespectful forms. What is worse is the impact on citizens, who unwittingly absorb a very questionable style of debate. From this language, the desire does not emerge for real discussion with the other in view of the common good, with the logical consequence of a cultural and social dispersion. Another disturbing issue is the banality of many contents conveyed by the media, addressed to an anesthetized audience, floating on a quiet mediocrity, devoid of critical spirit. There are only two aspects of the world scenario that challenge us. How can we place ourselves in it to face the demanding challenge of dialogue? It is important first of all to consolidate our identity, to form our own convictions, to deepen the motivations of our choice of life, to inquire about the relevant events of the local, national, and international community, with the desire and will to "*Choose the path of encounter and reject that of conflict*" (Pope Francis). To dialogue, it is necessary to have something to say, the willingness to listen to the other, and to understand him/her even beyond words. It is not simple. There are obstacles that must certainly be looked at realistically, but this does not mean they must force us to surrender. The capacity for dialogue is also the result of patient craftsmanship, of daily learning of a properly human art that can produce significant changes in our relationships, in the world around us, and at all levels. The exercise of this art allows a greater knowledge, a growing trust between the parties, and can reach a beautiful goal that expresses well Antoine de Saint-Exupery: "*My friend, beside you I have nothing to apologize for, nothing to defend myself from, nothing to prove: I find peace... Beyond my clumsy words, you can see in me simply the man*". It is a realistic love that welcomes the merits and defects of the other, resources and fragility, in the knowledge that everyone, even in the most beautiful relationships, always has something to forgive and something to be forgiven. "*At the heart of every sincere dialogue is, first of all, the recognition and respect of the other. Above all, there is the 'heroism' of forgiveness and mercy, which liberate us from resentment, from hatred, and open a truly new path*" (Pope Francis).

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"Earth and Peace" is the motto of the "United States of the World", a world federation of 181 countries and over 16,000 bodies of civil society that sees the Salesian Family - in particular the FMA - among the first founders and first subscribers of the "Constitution" approved on 18 November 2022. It establishes rights and duties for the inhabitants of the planet, having as reference the encyclicals *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*. The common denominator that marks 37 years of commitment with over 11,000 events held in the 5 continents is, "Dialogue for Peace".

(Michele Capasso, *United States of the World*, Ed. Magma, 2024)

■ Together for the Earth and for Peace

Rome, 2 May 2024. Return to Italy from the tormented Gaza. In the mind, the harrowing images of thousands of innocent children slaughtered by a senseless and absurd war: human suffering cannot be summed up. Walking among hundreds of sacks wrapped in white sheets containing the bodies of innocent children, held tight by mothers who no longer have tears, I remember the words that Saint John Paul II pronounced during the Angelus on Sunday, 29 May 1994: *"...The family is threatened; the family is attacked. The Pope must be attacked, the Pope must suffer, so that every family and the world may see that there is a Gospel, I would say, superior: the Gospel of suffering, with which the future must be prepared, the third millennium..."*.

During the journey to Naples, I reread a small book - meaning with this term the ancient usage with which we were referring to a particular book - printed by *Éditions Gérard & C.* and launched on 31 March 1966, at the 8th International Book Fair of Montreal: *Bâtir la Paix (Building Peace)*, by Father Dominique Pire. In 1958, he was awarded the "Nobel Peace Prize". Two years later, in 1960, he founded the

University of Peace in Huy. Pire writes: *"From a young age I realized the difference between social classes and the different choices about the problem of the existence of God. Diversities constitute the human heritage and often encounter those that cannot be harmonized: cases of injustice, misery, ignorance constitute a diminishment in the human being"*.

Rereading these words there comes to mind a conversation with Sister Maria Pia Giudici, FMA, in 2010, during which she told me: *"Michael, you who sail on the sea of peace with indomitable courage and the heart of a child, you have well understood that the diversities of the world, if harmonized, constitute a good force and a source of enrichment for all humanity, complementing each other instead of opposing each other."*

I had a long association with Sister Maria Pia for over a decade, during which we dealt with the fundamental themes of human existence, among them the safeguarding of creation and dialogue for peace. She suggested the motto "Earth and Peace" for the "United States of the World".

Dear Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Prize winner for Literature, said at one of our meetings at the beginning of this century: *"Michael, remember that you have a gift: to transform love for power into the power of love. It is not a question of pursuing a system of universal harmony, as Fourier or Leibnitz wished. If in an orchestra, everyone played on his own, a*

¹ Architect and engineer, founder in 1987, of the Mediterranean Foundation and the United States of the World. In 1990, he stopped his business, selling much of his assets to help victims of wars. Honorary professor in various universities, author of studies and publications in different languages.

cacophony would arise; if all the instruments were identical, it would be monotonous. It is much better if the inequality of instruments and the harmonization of sounds would arrive at a great universal symphony indispensable to save the planet and live in peace. The 'United States of the World' must implement this difficult action." The truth contained in the motto of Sister Maria Pia, which we find already in the interview with Naguib, will deeply nourish our common feeling and will constitute the basis of the unanimous and shared action for peace and the safeguarding of creation of the "United States of the World."

It was Gustavo Adolfo Rol, an enlightened and very religious man linked to the Salesian Family and to Don Bosco, who lived in Turin from 1903 to 1994, who launched on 11 January 1987, the "Appeal for the United States of the World". From a political and social point of view, Rol advocated since the 1940s the idea of "United States of the World" in the aftermath of World War II, which would not have happened if the "United States of Europe had already existed." There would not have been a Germany and an Italy against a France and a United Kingdom as it is unthinkable that there can be, for example, a Wyoming and Colorado against a Utah and an Idaho.

In a letter sent to the newspaper La Stampa and published on 27 January 1987, Rol wrote: *"The first men went to war: then two families, two tribes, two cities, then the war between nations began. Now the 'United States of Europe' is dreaming, but then? It would be the war between continents. So go to the 'United States of the World'.*

Everything moves fast today; we might as well anticipate the time to put an end to the current misfortunes and avert those to come.

I am certain that the 'United States of the World' is already written in history and it seems to me that science demonstrates this in its continuous, passionate exploration of a universe whose knowledge belongs to all the peoples of our tiny planet. Science, above all political considerations and in perfect ethical unity, is a common good." Rol had similar ideas even before the war, since 1937.

I met Gustavo Adolfo Rol in January 1987 at his home in Turin, accompanied by the "sculptor of color" Mario Molinari and his wife Pia Balducci. On that occasion, I set myself the goal of putting into practice Rol's appeal to create the "United States of the World", made the 11 January of that year in a telephone intervention during the television broadcast *Domenica In*, called in live by director

Sr. Maria Pia Giudici
and Michele Capasso.



Franco Zeffirelli and the host Raffaella Carrà. Since then, I changed my life, selling most of my goods to help the victims of wars and to promote dialogue and peaceful coexistence among peoples.

Gustavo Adolfo's appeal and idea was immediately transformed into a political-institutional project that would involve in the following years, starting from the area of the "Greater Mediterranean", over 180 countries and 16,000 organizations and institutions of Civil Society. Among the first founding members were the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

In 2017, in the Naples headquarters of the "United States of the World" and the "Museum of Peace", we established the "Salesian World

Oratory" with the Chapel containing the relics of St. John Bosco and St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello and an "emotional" path distributed on the five floors of the museum entitled "Don Bosco, the power of Love". After the inauguration with the Rector Major Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, and Mother Yvonne Reungoat, many Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from all over the world visit this unique place. In particular, many young people are impressed by the message and charism of Don Bosco that invites them, especially in this difficult moment of history, to become "hunters of the positive".

On 18 November 2022 in Naples, in the headquarters of the "United States of the World", representatives of the Salesian Family, the dream cultivated for 35 years is crowned: 181 countries and founding members sign the "Constitution of the United States of the

Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector
Major inaugurates the World
Salesian Oratory on 17
February 2017.

Mother Yvonne Reungoat with the
Provincial Councilors and the Animators
of the IMR Province, 9 November 2017.



World" containing the rights and duties of the inhabitants of the planet and based on encyclicals *Laudato si' e Fratelli tutti*.

The "United States of the World" brings together countries, international institutions, cities, universities, religious congregations, and civil society organizations in order to share knowledge to counter social injustices, wars, pandemics, the dissipation of resources, climate change. The fundamental objective is to affirm freedom and equality through the application of the fundamental rights of the human person. Since 1987, we have built a "large rope team" composed of men and women from the five continents whom with a common choral action, a change in the paradigm of development of the world through different geopolitics that must put the Common Good at the center, implementing new strategies of growth, competitiveness, and cooperation based on ethics has been supported, on social justice and the fair distribution of goods and resources. The "United States of the World" represents

a laboratory of ideas for concrete and shared actions that have at their core the safeguarding of fundamental values for humanity in respect for different identities and cultures, combining "Peace" and "Sustainability".

■ The Dialogue for Peace

Article 15 of the "Constitution of the United States of the World" - the only international body to have adopted one - states: *"The United States of the World pursues the Dialogue for Peace and works concretely for its protection, with the participation of all the inhabitants of the Earth: according to the principle of brotherhood and under the aegis of international organizations, contribute to promoting the diplomatic regulation of conflicts between States and the different cultural, ethnic, political, and religious realities."*

Dialogue for Peace requires above all men and women of good will who assume the role of "Dialoguers" but, above all, of "Forgivers". **"Forgiveness"** is the fundamental element to support Peace.

Visit of Abu Mazen giving the picture of Our Lady, symbol of Christian Palestine.



With the King of Spain Felipe VI, always a supporter of SUM.



With Shimon Peres, First Secretary General of the United States of the World.



After the attack by Hamas on Israel on 7 October 2023, during a trip to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, I tried to convince qualified and influential interlocutors on the need to "Forgive". In front of the images of mutilated, torn, beheaded bodies, burned and raped by Hamas terrorists, I called attention to the opportunity and need to "forgive", instead of taking revenge.

If the rulers of Israel had the strength to forgive and to immediately arrive at the constitution of "Two Peoples in two States" - for decades hoped - but promoting on the media around the world the atrocious images that only a small part of insiders could see, it would be the whole world and the Arab countries themselves to condemn and isolate the terrorist and fundamentalist movement for the massacre carried out.

This has not been the case. More than 35,000 Palestinian deaths - mostly innocent children - and more than 100,000 injured, have been added to the two thousand Israeli deaths to date, with a people of more than two million on continuous pilgrimage in a strip of land become their prison in the open, without food and without hope.

The basis of the Dialogue for Peace is above all **correct information**. In this case, for example, to inform that only to eliminate 18 million tons of rubble caused in Gaza by Israeli bombs will take 14 years and the entire area will be polluted forever, or that the global arms market has reached the astronomical figure of over three billion dollars for 2023 or that the costs incurred for the war in Ukraine and other parts of the world could have - if used otherwise - eliminated poverty from the planet and helped international research to save the earth from the reckless damage that we ourselves have caused, would certainly help in a useful reflection for dialogue.

One of the problems of this difficult moment in the history of the world - which hinders

Dialogue for Peace - is the mediocrity, ignorance, and often bad faith of those who govern us.

Today it is a great disgrace that a "peacemaker" should address people with the words of the politician. And the misfortune is so great that it cannot be greater.

At one time, as the hero of Andrei Platonov, I believed that for humanity the most important thing was not to disturb the life of another. Now I think a little differently. It is even more important to do everything possible so that nobody can disturb the lives of others.

In art, in politics, in all spheres of life, today we live in a world of second-rate people. Perhaps the Ukrainian tragedy, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the "piece-meal" wars (as Pope Francis says) in more than 50 countries of the world could have happened even in the time of Sartre, Camus, Picasso, Krleza, Iwaszkiewicz, De Nerval, Ehrenburg, Khrushchev, Eisenhower, Charles de Gaulle, Willy Brandt, Sandro Pertini, Olof Palme, Nehru, Neruda, Brecht, Heinrich Böll, Alberto Moravia, Arthur Miller, Max Frisch, but they would certainly have been minor in the scale of the crimes. And what is left of the real but tired intellectuals, the real artists, the real writers, what about them? Very little.

Here then appears before us the arduous and difficult task of supporting the Dialogue for Peace even in the presence of a jungle infected with mass communication tools, in the absence of founding values for humanity, and with the coming of the so-called "artificial intelligence" which, if not managed, will be a real ethical and moral catastrophe. A glimmer of hope is the participation, precisely on this theme, of Pope Francis in the next G7.

■ **Young hunters of the positive**

"My only thought goes especially to young people: they must become *hunters of the positive*, pursuing the *True*, the *Beautiful*, and

the *Good*". With these words, Sister Maria Pia answered my question about her spiritual testament, at the conclusion of a long life dedicated to the Lord².

And to the young Sister Maria Pia has truly dedicated her whole life, understanding that they are the producers of the future.

Dialogue for Peace means, today, to summarize the **ability to dialogue with young people**. Starting from families, where more and more often barriers, incomprehensions and misunderstandings are created that cause unimaginable tragedies. An important role belongs to parents who must know how to dialogue with their children with humility and firmness, placing themselves above all as an example. It is no coincidence that Don Bosco's charism and the irreplaceable action of Mother Mazzarello still constitute in these difficult times a fundamental anchor for young people, against the consumer drifts of today's society: the key word is "sharing".

"I'm here to share!" These were the first words addressed by Pope Francis to the 1,500 young people of Triveneta present on the churchyard of the Basilica of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice, at 10 am on 28 April 2024. We are invited to attend, with a small delegation from the "United States of the World", the short visit that lasts only five hours, but enough to write a page of important history for a city like Venice, already a destination for papal presences.

To the boys and girls, Pope Francis addresses the invitation to "get up from the ground because we are made for heaven; get up from



sadness to look up; get up to stand in front of life, not sitting on the sofa." With the tenderness but, at the same time, the firmness of a father, Francis exhorts the young people saying, "Row with constancy to go far".

Many words of the Pope have remained imprinted on me: "The great goals are reached with time, through love and faith, dialoguing for peace"; "The secret of great achievements is constancy"; "The mobile phone is useful but prevents you from meeting people; you need a hug, a handshake, a kiss: use your mobile phone but hug people!"; "DIY in the great things does not work: take life in your hands but *together*"; "Please always carry with you a small pocket Gospel and sometimes read a passage"; "The prayer of the Our Father is the most beautiful because the first word is 'Father': he who loves his son and does not abandon him".

Before saying goodbye to us, off the cuff as he often loves to do, Pope Francis says: "What was the thing I told you before?"

A loud and convinced cry rises from all the young people: "Get up and go!"



² The synthesis in the docufilm "*Maria Pia Giudici. Joy in a simple life*" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQvcHQ1d3h0&t=251s>