

## WFP Italy, People's Right to Peace,

Elisabetta Nistri

December 12, 2014

Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Rome Italy



The meeting took place in the hall dedicated to Pope John Paul II, offered by Dean Alejandro Crosthwaite of Angelicum University. It is the same hall where the future Pope Giovanni Paolo II, defended his dissertation, and it was a great honor for us to be hosted in such a significant place.

In spite of the ongoing national strike, which made it difficult to reach the venue, many people came and participated with great interest; in fact, at the end a very creative discussion ensued, with the desire to find solutions to the numerous problems relating to the construction of peace.



The speakers presented some analyses and very interesting suggestions about peace issues, tackling the problem from different perspectives.

The meeting opened with a welcoming address by Carlo Zonato, President of UPF Italy, and by Dean Prof. Alejandro Crosthwaite. Prof. Crosthwaite said that in spite of the numerous conflicts afflicting our world, we should not give up, but follow the example of the many people who gave an important contribution to peace and, as the Chinese philosopher Lao-tsu said: “A one thousand mile journey starts just from one step”. We can take that single step in the long trip towards peace in the presence of our relations, friends and all the people we meet in our daily lives. I must believe that the little love I am sowing now will bear much fruit in this world and in future life. The Dean had to depart immediately after his address, for an important meeting with Pope Francis, and we asked him to give the Pope our warmest greetings.



Prof. Bertirotti, head of Communication and External Relations of UNEDUCH (United Education Charter), spoke about the anthropological reason why peace is necessary for humanity and how we are actually heading towards this direction. He also stated: “Peace is realized by doing naturally what neurons do in our bodies, they work together, they do not fight”.



Dr. Stango, Secretary General of the Italian Helsinki Committee on Human Rights, illustrated the fundamental human rights, pointing out that if two countries claim to respect human rights but they make war against each other, it means that at least one of them is not respecting them.

Giuseppe Calì, head of UPF Rome, spoke about the important role played by religions in achieving peace through dialogue, and introduced UPF proposal of creating an Interreligious Peace Council at the United Nations with major representatives of religions and civil societies working for peace.

Antonella Pollicita, President of the Commission for Social Policies of Municipio 1 spoke about her work to establish an Intercultural & Inclusion Council; she said she encountered many obstacles along the way, but her conviction of the importance of this work on the territory, enabled her to always find the determination to go on.

Silvia Pelliccia, the Mayor's Representative for the relationships with Religious Communities, reported on an interesting project of the Mayor to initiate a constructive dialogue with all religious communities present in the territory; it will start with making "the other, the different" known in the schools, for instance through programs that allow children to learn about the traditional celebrations of other faiths and peoples.



Elisabetta Nistri, President of WFP – Italy, remarked that, infringing on the dignity of a person (very often women and children) even in countries where there are no wars, is a cause of great suffering. She quoted the speech of Queen Rania of Jordan at the Abu Dhabi Media Summit: "The images that ISIS promotes on social media should make every Arab seethe, and warned moderates who are silent on the issue are complicit in ISIS' success". She also quoted what Denis Mukwege, a doctor from the Democratic Republic of Congo, winner of Sakharov human rights prize, said at the European Parliament in Strasburg: "In my humble opinion the real politics demonstrates that geostrategic and economic interests prevail over respect and the defense of human rights; I hope everybody here may assure great consistency between economical politics and respect for human rights, considering the origin of the product which is going to be sold in Europe". Devoted for years to curing abducted and raped women in Congo, he still cannot understand why no international political authority is providing any effective intervention.

The last speaker, Mrs. Teresenko, President of the Ukrainian Community in Italy, thanked for the organization of the conference. She described the situation of her people as an example of self-determination and battle for freedom. Believing that education for peace is fundamental, she suggested introducing a new subject in all Catholic schools and universities: "The culture of dialogue with the different. The culture of peace".

After the presentations there was a debate whose moderator - Dr. Evaldo Cavallaro, an educator, psychologist and therapist – could very skillfully deal with the many suggestions, reflections and questions of the participants.

At the end, Carlo Zonato thanked all the participants and invited everybody to continue to cooperate with UPF and WFWP for the realization of their common goal: resolving conflicts to build peace in every context.

