
La Pira. Giunti: “In Brussels we will say that in our nuclear age peace and dialogue are the only way forward”

A message of peace and dialogue as “the only way forward”, because “in our world of the nuclear era, war means the destruction of life on Earth.” The young members of the Mediterranean Youth Council brought this message to the heart of the European Union. The delegation, comprising young men and women from Lebanon, Tunisia, Slovenia and Spain, accompanied by the Secretary General of the Italian Bishops' Conference, Bishop Giuseppe Baturi, was received on Wednesday 3 April by the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola. The members of the delegation were the protagonists of a public event at the European Parliament on Thursday 4 April on the theme “Building bridges of dialogue, unity and peace between peoples and cultures”. Created as a flagship initiative following the meeting of Bishops and Mayors of the Mediterranean (Florence, 23-27 February 2022), the Council is above all “a generative experience, because the dialogue between young people creates relationships that will generate other initiatives and projects”, explains Gabriele Pecchioli, President of the “Giorgio La Pira” Youth Organisation. The Council is already planning projects based on four guidelines: socio-political commitment, education, cultural and inter-religious dialogue, young people and ecclesial communities. SIR asked **Patrizia Giunti**, president of the La Pira Foundation, for an “assessment” of these days of meetings in the EU institutions. **What does it mean to bring the voice of peace and dialogue to Brussels, to the heart of Europe?** It means to build up hope in the face of despair. Following the teaching of Giorgio La Pira, it means promoting the possibility of building bridges of dialogue, even when our present circumstances point to moments of complete darkness. It means echoing voices of peace and sending out rays of hope. That was the La Pira message. And it is our responsibility today. **Against the backdrop of this sea, which is marked by wars and migrations, what are the greatest challenges?** The preservation of human dignity. Human dignity and human life are denied by the plight of migration, by exploitation, by indifference, by non-acceptance, by the unspeakable suffering of wars. The overriding concern is that all this is happening today. The world has gone through the tragedies of the Second World War, of totalitarianism and the denial of the value of the human person. Then, in the second half of the 20th century, the supranational institutions, the human rights charters, the experience of democracies and the creation of the European Union made it possible to rebuild and to hope for a future of peace among peoples and dialogue between religions and faiths. Today, this hope and certainty are being challenged. The outlook is one of grave concern and instability. **What do you see as the mission of this “Mediterranean Youth Council”?** These young people, appointed by the Churches of the Mediterranean countries, symbolise a message of peace and a vision of the future. We turn to this initiative with hope in the face of a future that can appear fraught with danger and shrouded in fog. Our generation was convinced that these horizons of uncertainty and precariousness were a thing of the past, but unfortunately this is not the case. **What have been your requests to the European Union over the last few days?** That Europe be what it was originally conceived for, a union of peoples, drawing on the strength of the culture it is rooted in, and open to the whole world. Europe’s vocation is dialogue and the construction of prosperity and peace for all continents. That is Europe’s vocation. **Faced with a Europe that is arming itself, which voice do the Churches of the Mediterranean wish to convey instead?** The voice of those who called for the recovery of those values which, in the second half of the 20th century, formed the response to the tragedy of the Second World War. The message of La Pira, namely the impossibility, even the illogicality, of war as an instrument of conflict resolution, is the message that the Churches, young people and peoples of the Mediterranean proclaim today. In our world of the nuclear era, war means the destruction of life on Earth. To consider war as an instrument of conflict resolution is truly utopian, while the only viable and feasible reality is one of dialogue and peace. That is the great legacy of the founding Fathers that wrote the Italian Constitution and of the founding Fathers of the European Union.

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