

Educating young people in justice and peace



The Holy Father Benedict XVI has chosen the following theme for the celebration of the 45th World Day of Peace of January 1, 2012: “Educating Young People in Justice and Peace”. The theme engages an urgent need in the world today: to listen to and enhance the important role of new generations in the realization of the common good, and in the affirmation of a just and peaceful social order where fundamental human rights can be fully expressed and realized.

In fact, there is a duty incumbent upon the present generation to prepare future ones, and creating for them the conditions that will allow these future generations to express freely and responsibly the urgency for a “new world.” The Church welcomes young people and sees them as the sign of an ever promising springtime, and holds out Jesus to them as the model of love who “makes all things new” (Ap. 21,5).

Those responsible for public policy are called to work for the creation of institutions, laws and environments of life that are permeated by a transcendent humanism that offers new generations opportunities to fully realize themselves (e.g. decent job, education etc.) and to build a civilization of fraternal love directed toward a more profound awareness of truth, freedom, of love and of justice for all persons.

This, then, is the prophetic dimension of the theme chosen by the Holy Father in the path of the “pedagogy of peace” indicated by John Paul II in 1985 (“Peace and Youth Go Forward Together”), in 1979 («To Reach Peace, Teach Peace”), and in 2004 (“An Ever Timely Commitment: Teaching Peace”).

Young persons must labour for justice and peace in a complex and globalized world. It is therefore necessary to establish a new “pedagogical alliance” among all those responsible for the education and

formation of young people. The theme indicates an important area of concern in the teaching of Benedict XVI in his Messages for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, beginning with the need for the truth (2006: “In Truth, Peace”), followed with the reflections on human dignity (2007: “The Human Person, the Heart of Peace”), on the human family (2008: “The Human Family, a Community of Peace”), on poverty (2009: “Fighting Poverty to Build Peace”), on the care for creation (2010: “If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation”), on religious freedom (2011: “Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace”), and now talking to the minds and beating hearts of young people: “Educating Young People in Justice and Peace.”