



WORLD YOUTH PARLIAMENT

MANIFESTO WYP Salamanca • Spain 2019

PEACE UNDER CONSTRUCTION:

*Making Decisions Together
for a New Civilization*



Idente Youth
Ad Deum propter humanitatem

*Joined together,
our hands have received
and labored
to sculpt one
unique word.*

*We bring this
unarmed verb,
this bare column,
securely
to this point;
to place it
silently
as a seed for humanity.*

WYP MANIFESTO 2019

Dialogue and joint decision-making form part of a work always in progress, where we all are apprentices or interns, never master builders. Very few truly wish to invest in this enterprise, in this great undertaking. However, it is one of the most crucial missions we are called to fulfill in this world. Peace means to build bridges, establish relationships, restore bonds, forge common proposals.

We young people, assembled as a parliament, view peace as the fruit of a joint task. The seeds of this fruit can be discovered in each and every one of us. Our actions cannot bring others to peace if we are not submerged in peace. A concrete path to construct peace is learning joint decision-making and dialogue. Every structure needs good ground, firm foundations, and strong pillars. These are the essential elements we propose to the world in this manifesto.

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί
Mt.5,9

Happy the peacemakers
Felices los constructores de paz
Felici i pacificatori
Heureux les artisans de paix
Selig die, die Frieden schaffen

I THE EXPLORATION BEGINS: VERIFICATION OF FACTS

*“The path of what is lacking passes through what there is.
We must start from reality
in order to take the leap into ‘what we lack’.
We must scrutinize the ordinary
in order to open ourselves to the extraordinary” - Pope Francis*

Before getting to work, we have probed and studied the intrapersonal and interpersonal terrain in order to begin working on our relationships in the best way possible. In terms of dialogue and decision-making, we observe the following:

- ▶ When we wish to dialogue, we want to be heard and tend to impose our own ideas. We act as if the only correct and valid perspective were ours, thereby shutting out the other’s opinion. Dialogue becomes a competition to see who is right. We tend to be self-interested and look for what is comfortable. Unity is impossible with this attitude, because it allows disengagement from others and our surrounding reality. We dialogue impulsively. We rarely take time to observe and attempt to understand the person and the problem in front of us. As a result, we label others as enemies without even knowing them, causing prejudices and mutual distrust.
- ▶ On numerous occasions, because of complexes, the fear of loneliness, and the fear of rejection, we are passive in dialogue and in decision-making. However, this comfortable and easy attitude never allows us to transform reality. When we dialogue, frequently we do so apathetically, not feeling responsible for the peace that should exist between us. As a result, we do not make the necessary effort not to be led by impatience, passivity, and haste. All of this is fertile ground for misunderstandings and conflicts.

- ▶ In order to be accepted by others, at times we think it is necessary to remain silent, feigning approval, without sharing our feelings and opinions. Additionally, we tend to escape difficulties, thereby believing that conflicts endanger the serenity we wish to live out in our shared experience, our coexistence.

II ANALYSIS OF THE TERRAIN: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

“When human existence does not point beyond itself, permanence in life ceases to have meaning, it is impossible” - Viktor Frankl

We recognize that it is difficult to live together, work as a team, dialogue, and make decisions together for the following reasons:

- ▶ We find it difficult to give in and detach ourselves from our ideas because we view this as a loss and not as a necessary condition to construct dialogue. At times we think we are right and are thus led to impose these thoughts on others.
- ▶ Sometimes we do not value the other person. We dialogue with the thought that very few people can contribute to our perspective. We emphasize ourselves, our thoughts, and our ideas and deemphasize others. We do not realize that others have the same dignity as we do and have transcendence, a capacity for truth, goodness, and beauty, and, as a result, can change, contribute, and perfect our identities and opinions.
- ▶ We do not realize that we are all responsible for a group's unity and care for our common home, our planet. We look for personal benefit, as opposed to the common good. In order to do this, we disregard others' ideas and interests. When we do not take this responsibility, we have superficial dialogue and superficial relationships.
- ▶ Fear of rejection and criticism guide our actions, and we encounter others with mistrust. Consequently, we are not our true selves, allowing deceit to cloud our relationships.
- ▶ The dissolution of crucial realities in society, such as families, friends, and fidelity, make it very difficult to create a true sense of community that is goal-oriented and with common values.
- ▶ Consumerism has driven us to judge people by their productivity and efficiency. We see others with our own ideas and expectations of them, and this can lead to conflict and competition.
- ▶ We do not recognize the wealth that exists in diversity and, therefore, tend to create walls between people and within groups. Conflicts create separation, wounds, anger, judgements, resentment, and stereotypes, situations that do not allow dialogue among ourselves and with God.
- ▶ A consequence of fear of diversity and approaching others with distrust is a lack of mutual respect that creates contentious dialogue. Prejudices prevent us from opening up and listening to others, leading to isolation.

- ▶ Ultimately, we become completely disinterested in reality and accept it passively. There is a social laziness that leaves us adrift and makes us lose life's meaning.
- ▶ We use technology in a superficial manner, thereby making it difficult to find truth and obtain authentic personal development. In this way, we escape reality and fall into trivial relationships. In fact, it is ever more common to be a "slave" of these new worlds, which lead us to a profound individualism and isolation and the sadness that ensues.
- ▶ Not recognizing these causes and consequences deprives us of a personal and social enrichment that comes only from authentic interpersonal relations.

III LET'S DO IT! MAKING DECISIONS IN PEACE AND FOR PEACE

"We cannot walk alone" - Martin Luther King

1. Why together?

Although we are part of a broken humanity because of indifference, separation, and violence, we realize that all human beings have commonalities, realities that unite us as sisters and brothers.

- (1) We are capable of relation and we all have **a profound yearning for more**. However, these similarities are not enough to establish communion among us. We hear the call to take responsibility for walking towards communion, though we are wounded, in order to restore ourselves and our fragile relationships.
- (2) Our effort is needed to make our bond with others a reality. Crucial for this reality is a disposition open to others, free of prejudices. We are willing, by virtue of communion, to open our ideas and perspectives to all that can enrich us when we listen to the ideas of others. **Communion is not stationary, but a journey, and is worthy of conquest.**
- (3) **We are not alone.** We live in an interconnected world where everything we do inevitably affects others and, by the same token, we need each other for everything we must do. We know ourselves in relation to each other; we grow and are ourselves in relation; in our diversity we complement each other. Working together towards a new civilization allows us to truly belong to it.
- (4) Joint decision-making seems contrary to efficiency. However, we realize that when we work together towards a common objective, **this unity** allows us to reach difficult and unexpected goals.
- (5) **Joint decision-making is a school of generosity**, where we learn to put aside our selfish tendency, in order to make way for the common good. Furthermore, it teaches us to be humble, to listen to and think of others, which are virtues necessary to live together. Only by working together

new goals arise and are sustained, because we open our horizons to ideas that would have never appeared if we had not joined with others.

2. Let's Start Digging

"Examine everything; hold on to what is good " - 1Th 5:21-22

We know that it is not enough for everyone to work well alone. A common project should be built. To achieve it, we need examining, discerning together, that means to open up our sight. This type of perspective involves the following:

- (1) To reflect on ourselves and **observe how we relate to others**, with a desire to be sincere with others in order to obtain critical insight.
- (2) Before judging or imagining irregular situations, we should make **the attempt to profoundly** know and understand a person or situation. This implies self-observation first. It is difficult for us to admit our mistakes. Many times the negative tendencies we see in others are our own projections.
- (3) Thoroughly examine situations and have the maturity to understand the other. This implies that we should thoroughly consider the reasons why conflict is generated within and among ourselves. We understand that **every action produces a negative or positive reaction or consequence in others**.
- (4) To profoundly analyze the issues that may arise in our interpersonal relationships means **to reach the root of our thoughts, actions, and desires**. Daily self-observation can be helpful.
- (5) **To look for, encounter, develop, and learn from the goodness** that surrounds us, in order to be empathetic.

3. Crisis

"Any attempt to iron out the difference only leads to greater conflict and bitterness" - Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

Peace is not the absence of conflict or suffering. It does not depend on how others treat us. Crises created by conflicts and differing thoughts are not enemies of peaceful relations. So, what does 'crisis' mean for us?

- ▶ A crisis represents a turning point which cannot be ignored and **must be acknowledged**. This is the first step, the first brick.
- ▶ A conflict can be within oneself and it can represent an occasion for personal growth, an **opportunity to construct, re-construct and restore** relationships among us.
- ▶ Moments of crisis **help us** to acknowledge circumstances that are not easily seen, such as our tendency towards power. Many crises are due to

fear or the difficulty we have in accepting our own and others' differences and mistakes. Because of these crises, we are able to view our relationships as a building under construction.

- ▶ **The bonds that unite us are reinforced in the most critical moments.** When we fail to accept and confront conflicts, we easily fall into envy, insecurity, resentment, frustration, and jealousy towards others.
- ▶ A crisis is an opportunity to learn, to discuss, to dialogue, and to ask for help. In order to find common ground, it may be helpful to listen to a third person's opinion, since we tend to be fixated on our own opinions. **We encounter a different viewpoint when we ask for help in conflict resolution.** We should not seek to resolve our conflicts alone.

4. Foundations

“Nearly half the misery of the world would disappear if we, fretting mortals, knew the virtue of silence” - Mahatma Gandhi

If our goal is to construct a building capable of withstanding any adversity, we cannot use just any material. We believe that joint decision-making and thinking together should be founded on the following:

- (1) Having the courage and bravery **to step out of our comfort zone** and being willing to express our opinions even when we feel what we say may lead to conflict. We can solve our misunderstandings through dialogue.
- (2) Open-mindedness and attentiveness to others, with genuine interest in others and in what they are communicating, so that **nothing stated may be lost**, but instead taken into consideration. Mutual respect that values a person's dignity and inner wealth is the basis for true communication. **Listening is a bridge** that allows us to overcome conflicts.
- (3) Two other fundamental pieces of this building are **humility and sincerity**. To truly be attentive, we need to be aware of the fact that sometimes we make mistakes. We cannot judge a position as incorrect before understanding the other's position. Once we recognize and remove any belief in superiority from our relationships, **we discover that all people have something to contribute**.
- (4) **Welcome the other's perspective**. It is necessary to do everything possible to bring about unity. Variety and diversity bring richness.
- (5) We understand that we also need to set forth our opinions, as opposed to just wanting to be right. Unity takes precedence over the fact that an opinion is right. We must make the effort **to be open to the common good**.
- (6) **Silence before decision-making is necessary**. Noise in the form of prejudices, sentiments, and envy must be pushed aside. Authentic silence avoids impulsiveness. It makes us sensitive to viewing, with

great sincerity and care, our own feelings as well as the feelings of others. Additionally, it allows us to be empathetic and to differentiate between positive and negative thoughts. Silence affords us the opportunity to examine our lives, the lives of others, and our own relationships.

- (7) **Personal commitment** is also needed in dialogue and peaceful decision-making. This is not a simple task since it requires that we put our ideas up for discussion and control our impulses and the thoughts motivated only by self-comfort. Equilibrium and communion with others are fruits of personal reflection.
- (8) It is normal for difficulties to arise in decision-making. With our **creativity and flexibility**, we can transform traps into trampolines.
- (9) An atmosphere of trust and respect for guidelines is also necessary. Self-sacrifice and generosity, which foster in us **a spirit of open-mindedness and service** for the common good, create a climate of trust that makes dialogue easier.
- (10) **Openness to transcendence.** Fruitful dialogue and the decision-making process do not depend only on ourselves, our abilities, virtues, strategies and methods. Nor do they depend only on others. In order for dialogue and joint decision-making to be fruitful, we have to take into account what we recognize, receive, and learn from God. **We receive something new, unpredictable, and surprising** when there is a state of prayer and openness to divine inspiration.

5. Pillars

"We must learn to live with ourselves as with a multitude of people. Only in this way we can discover, in ourselves, all the good and bad qualities of humanity" - Etty Hillesum

The following **principles** are what we consider 'supporting pillars' for joint decision-making in and for peace:

- (1) **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE** - Constructing relationships becomes our daily task when we consistently commit ourselves to opening our perspectives for the sake of the common good. As a result, we become a witness to peace and not just peace builders. Shared personal experience transforms us into authentic constructors and witnesses to peace, since it directly impacts our surroundings.
- (2) **VALUE THE PROCESS AND THE TIME IT NEEDS** - It is necessary to dedicate our time to each person without haste and in the proper contexts. All should be given the time to express their ideas in relation to the theme, in a concise manner. In this way, all participants are guaranteed an opportunity to express themselves. Moments of silence are crucial. Impulsive communication, without reflecting on the situation and others, runs the risk of generating conflicts.

Our goal is contrary to the culture of immediacy, which desires the “here and now.” Constructing our interpersonal relationships is a task that requires time, patience, and commitment. The process by which we establish unifying dialogue through our personal effort is already an achievement.

- (3) **DIFFERENT IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH WRONG!** - Reality unfolds through a wealth of differences. Diversity is a source of beauty and enrichment. Appreciating differences and not letting them separate us allow us to construct.
- (4) **UNITY AS OPPOSED TO UNIFORMITY** - True conflict resolution does not consist of choosing the best idea and aligning with it. In a process of joint decision-making, the result is that contributions reflect communion among those taking part.
- (5) **CONSTRUCTING DIALOGUE WITH A VIEW TOWARDS JOINT DECISION-MAKING** - When constructing, it is crucial to see how each brick will be laid. One brick incorrectly laid will cause instability to affect the entire structure. We must be very attentive so that when we realize that we have put a crooked brick, we stop the construction and try to align it before continuing. We should pay attention to the contrasting signals that may surface among persons: disagreements, feeling offended, signs of anger. With humility and serenity, these signs can be overcome. We can take advantage of these differences as the beginning of constructive dialogue, necessary for any authentic discussion.

6. Joint Decision-making

“Dialogue should be characterized by poverty: one goes as a poor person to find among others the truth and the solution” - Óscar A. Romero

Joint decision-making is not easy. However, since any challenge that is worthwhile presents numerous difficulties, we still decide to face it.

Every decision is the consequence of a process with its rules and methods. However, in order to ensure that both the process and the outcome result from interpersonal relationships that are solid, authentic, open, and oriented towards peace, multiple phases are necessary. Below we will describe these phases, remembering that they require a climate of openness, sincerity, and poverty of spirit.

- (1) **DETERMINING SHARED PRINCIPLES** - We need to define common goals with respect to the decision-making process. For example, a climate of mutual respect and friendship among the members must be maintained throughout the process. Having these conditions ensures that selfishness, the desire to prevail, and other obstacles do not tarnish the objective.

- (2) **DEFINING THE SITUATION** - In order to start a process of joint decision-making, it is necessary that the situation be clear to all members so they may identify the problem. Also crucial is to establish clear objectives of the dialogue, taking into account the time available.
- (3) **EXPRESSING IDEAS** - In this phase, all members should contribute their ideas and positions, defining the problem. The success of the process rests upon effective communication and a common language to avoid misunderstandings and allow others to have a clear point of view in order to make the most inclusive decision possible.
- (4) **DIVISION AMONG SUBGROUPS** - In order to ensure everyone's participation, dividing them into subgroups of 3-4 persons may be useful.
- (5) **QUESTION EACH OTHER** - Authentic questions push our own ideas to the side and enable us to engage with the ideas of others. We question each other, not just to initiate conversation, but to invite others not to be defensive, but express their opinion. This is an important phase, since it is a way to meet others in a profound manner.
- (6) **REFLECTING PERSONALLY** - Aside from listening and sharing ideas, it is important to have a time for personal reflection: a moment of silence to reflect on what we have heard and, as a result, enrich our point of view.
- (7) **MAKING IDEAS CIRCULATE: SYNTHESIS AS A METHOD** - After a series of proposals are chosen, each member expresses a point of view regarding the issue involved. In the second round, each member indicates the idea which seems most important. This process is repeated until commonalities surface. The purpose is to take all members into consideration to reach one unified group. (Writing is a process which requires reflection. Therefore, the ideas expressed in the circle can also be written.)
- (8) **DECISION** - In this progressive selection and reduction of proposals, a decision must be made that reflects the effort of each and every participant. Very probably, the final result will not be any of the initial proposals, but a new vision which expresses the union of all the members.
- (9) **EVALUATION** - If a group reaches a decision, it does not represent the end of the process. It is crucial to have a moment to analyze and reflect on the consequences of the decisions made in the short and long terms on a personal and societal level. This will serve as a basis for other resolutions. In the light of the consequences, changes to the proposal and the decision-making process are considered. This is our way of reaching a decision together. However, the essential is not just reaching the goal post, but the joy of each step of the process: living out the joy of constructing together.

7. Towards a New Horizon

“Our conscience is a battlefield where - with ardent roar - we must free the unbreakable will to be just persons” - Fernando Rielo

To the extent that we detach ourselves from comfort, pessimism, and our failure to commit, a new horizon opens for us that unmasks numerous preconceptions we had about peace. Examples of these erroneous preconceptions are:

- (1) Thinking that the only way to peace and to obtaining a climate of nonviolence is the imposition and passive acceptance of the strongest member's ideas instead of making the effort to create dialogue in and for peace.
- (2) The belief that, when we feel offended, or in order to avoid conflict, the only solution is a negative and comfortable silence which in the end does not resolve conflicts. Instead, it limits itself to hiding the conflict and to avoiding it.
- (3) A false tolerance that allows us to accept negative ideas and behaviors for the sake of the common good or to comfortably accept opinions in order to avoid any conflict, even if the opinion seems incorrect. An example may be that we allow friends to taunt others for fear of damaging or losing our friendship with them. On the contrary, we have discovered that peace among ourselves, the peace we aspire to, is an arduous, constant, and daily task. It is a building that needs every one of us.
- (4) We have also realized that the decision-making process can become our daily way of acting. Joint decision-making can help us live in and for peace.

8. Building up peace

Our building is always under construction: we can never state that it is completed. We have constructed a building that is irregular, difficult to enjoy at first glance, sometimes frightening. It is uncontrollable because it surpasses us, but, still, we feel part of it. It is a high building that stretches out towards transcendence. Full of light, it creates an impact. By its originality, it surprises and attracts people's attention. A few characteristics are:

- (1) The building of peace has a square foundation with a thousand pillars, each of its own kind and design but with equal size and measurements. This represents the differences we have as a human race. When observed at a certain angle, the pillars look like one pillar, symbolizing the

unity among all peoples and the desire of working together. It has two enormous doors: all are welcome. All of the spaces are accessible to those of any age and condition. It has excellent acoustics that allow us to listen, dream, and project for the future.

- (2) It is a historical building, with a universal style that embraces every civilization. We do not want to forget the work done by numerous master builders of the past, nor erase what has occurred; it is flexible, in keeping with the times, with good foundations to withstand any conflict or tremor arising from our egoism. Our roots are firmly planted.
- (3) The walls are made of bricks. Every brick has a function, a specific purpose, and place. The cement is the common and personal will that unites us. It has an enormous, never-ending dome.
- (4) To ensure that the building is always in the best condition, maintenance is crucial. It is normal for this building to deteriorate, given the use it will have. We have to be vigilant so as not to grow accustomed to seeing small cracks that may surface. If we do not restore it in time, the entire structure of our personal relationships may be in danger.

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WORLD YOUTH PARLIAMENT - WWW.WYPARLIAMENT.ORG

WYP International Committee - wyp@identeyouth.org

IDENTE YOUTH - WWW.IDENTEYOUTH.ORG