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# Benedict XVI Calls Focolare Youth to Bridge Gap Among All People

## 12,000 Youth Attend Genfest Gathering In Budapest

By Junno Arocho

BUDAPEST, Hungary, SEPT. 4, 2012 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- In a message to Maria Voce, president of the Focolare Movement, Pope Benedict XVI greeted participants of the movement's annual Genfest youth gathering held in Budapest last weekend. An estimated 12,000 youth attended the three-day event that focused on the theme "Let's Bridge!"

Through his secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Holy Father expressed his joy at the meeting and spoke of the city of Budapest as an "eloquent symbol" of the event's theme.

"The numerous bridges that span the Danube, that connect the settlements from Buda and Pest and make them a single unity, were destroyed during World War II," he reflected. "Yet, born from the ashes of that terrible conflict was the determination to build peace on lasting foundations, a determination that was the inspiration at the base of the foundation of the Focolare Movement. The bridges of the Danube were reconstructed and the international community was determined to eliminate once and for all the conditions that could lead to a future conflict."

Founded in 1943 by Chiara Lubich, the Focolare Movement has spread to more than 100 nations across the globe. The ecclesial movement focuses on the spirituality of unity and universal brotherhood. According to the official Web site of Genfest, the purpose of the youth gathering is "to show the world that universal brotherhood, a united world, is an Ideal worth living for."

The Pope expressed his desire that the meeting's presence in Budapest would encourage the ideal of bridging the gap among people of different cultures. "I hope that this most beautiful city will be a sign of hope to inspire all the young people present to offer a hand of friendship to those who come from other contexts and cultures, so as to give shape to the earthly city in unity and peace, rendering it in some measure an anticipation and a prefiguration of the undivided city of God," the papal message said.

The current president of the Focolare movement, Maria Voce, echoed the Holy Father's sentiment and spoke on the event's theme during her keynote address, calling on the youth to use their talents

and abilities in serving others. "Begin to love concretely. The first step will not involve grand scale actions, but those small acts of love that make life great and have the power to change the world and influence society and never allow the bridges that have been built today to lessen," Voce said.

"The first bridge was built right here among yourselves. You've constructed a small bit of united world and each of you carries the strength of this experience within you. And so you shall file forth from this Sport Arena like a great river of love."

The Genfest youth gathering also saw the launch of the United World Project. The project, which was conceived and developed by youth members of the movement, "aims to highlight and promote fraternity already under way by individuals, groups and nations." The United World Project is also set to begin a permanent international observatory recognized by the United Nations.

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