

AT SCHOOL TO MANAGE CONFLICTS, WE NEED BETTER PEOPLE

by Paolo Ferrario - daily newspaper l'Avvenire - 18 December 2022 - page 7.

Peace is built starting from the small gestures of every day, from the daily work that, for children and young people, consists essentially in going to school.

It is from this place, then, that true 'education for Peace' must start, capable of involving pupils, teachers and families in a network capable of transcending Italian borders to embrace schools all over the world.

This is the ambitious but necessary objective of the initiative launched by the Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (MCE) and the International Federation of Modern School Movements (FIMEM)

which wants to dedicate the entire school year to the themes of Peace and peaceful coexistence among peoples. The project was launched last 20 November on the occasion of the International Day of the Rights of the Child and Adolescent (the first of which is precisely that

of Peace) and will continue until the end of classes in June, with a webinar in spring 2023 involving all participating schools.

Already in these first weeks, the promoters have received adhesions from all over Italy and even abroad (from France to Spain, but also from South America, Africa and Japan) and will publish all local initiatives on a dedicated website (<http://www.webottegaforthepeace.it/it/attivita>).

"Our model is the active school of the Frenchman Celestin Freinet, a proponent of popular pedagogy that places pupils' protagonism at the centre," explains Roberto Lovattini, an elementary school teacher in Piacenza for over forty years and exponent of the Educational Cooperation Movement. "If we want to give meaning to our being at school,' adds the teacher, 'we must start from Peace Education, helping to form citizens capable of building a

better world. Women and men able to cooperate, mediate and resolve conflicts - which will always exist in society - without resorting to violence. But,' recalls Lovattini, 'non-violence cannot be improvised, it needs constant education and exercise, which schools are able to guarantee.

In the wake of the teachings of the great masters of peace such as Don Milani, the promoters of the 'Network of Schools for Peace' are sure that, set up in this way, teaching will also benefit.

"It is true that one goes to school to learn," Lovattini concludes, "but learn how? By working in groups, collaborating and helping those who are in difficulty, or simply for the grade? You go to school to learn because society needs better people."

Of 'school as the civil conscience of society' speaks the other project

coordinator, Lanfranco Genito, a Neapolitan teacher and until August president of Fimeme. 'Civic education,' he adds, 'is not just a subject, but a concrete way of taking an interest in what is happening around you.

And in times of war, it is urgent to take an interest in Peace.

