

Towards Genfest 2018. 44 years after the first edition, this will be the first Genfest on the Asian continent



A great opportunity for encounter among young people and cultures. 44 years after the first edition, this will be the first Genfest on the Asian continent.

World Trade Centre Metro in Manila, Philippines, 6-8 July 2018. The meeting is for thousands of young people from all over the world, motivated by an idea, almost a fixation, which shapes their lives and all their social projects: building a just and united world. **The Genfest 2018, *Beyond all borders*, is an invitation to let the barriers, borders, and limits which stand in the way of this goal, crumble.**

The Genfest began in 1973 with an idea from Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, and in more than 40 years it has gathered together tens of thousands of young people. The Genfest of 2018 will be the eleventh edition, and the first to be outside of Europe.

In its long history, each Genfest has been an important step and has seen many projects come to life: among these is the idea for the World Youth Days, begun in 1985; in the same year, the birth of the Youth for a United World (YFUW); the World Unity Week, active since 1996, to showcase the initiatives which promote unity, at all levels, in the world; and finally, since 2012, the United World Project, a permanent observatory of all good practices on a planetary level.

This Genfest will just precede the Synod on young people, which will be held in October 2018. Meeting with the organizers, present at this time at Castelgandolfo (Rome) for the meeting of the delegates of the Focolare Movement from all over the world, we have gathered some “first-hand” news. **Ding Dalisay** represents the Philippines at this assembly: “To our great joy, we have received the support of the president of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, who encourages us to work to bring the Genfest to as many young people as possible. For some time now the youth of the Philippines have been touring in caravans to present the Genfest in parishes, universities,

and other places. We have great hope that many young people will come.” **Carlo Gentile**, delegate of the Philippines along with Ding: “It will be the first Genfest in Asia, so it will be a very important multicultural event. Chiara Lubich called the Genfest a “cascade of God.” We can expect a wonderful event that has been prepared for all the youth from Asia, but also the whole world; a profound experience, immersed in the Asian culture.

A worldwide mobilization has already begun. There are many contacts with other Movements, for example with the youth of the Rissho Kosei-kai, a Japanese Buddhist lay association, with six million followers, and with the Youth World Peace Forum, which will celebrate its own annual meeting in Manila during the same time period as the Genfest. In some parts of the world, smaller Genfest activities are being planned with local initiatives. A committee of 30 young people, representatives of different geographical areas of the world, with the coordination of the international secretariat of the Youth for a United World, is already at work. **Kiara Cariaso and Diego Lopez explain:** “We are working to bring young people from all over the world to the Genfest in Manila. There are already many activities, not only in the Philippines, because it will be a planetary event which we build together.” “In fact,” **continues Diego**, “we are gathering ideas that come from young people from all countries, we work together, and we send them to the Philippines.”

They explain: “**The 2018 Genfest will take place in three phases: the first**, preceding the rally, with the possibility for many youth from various parts of the world to get to know the Asian cultures. It will be a unique intercultural, interreligious, and social experience, which will take place in different Asian countries. **Following this, the central event in Manila**, from 6 to 8 July, in which we want youth from every part of the world to be able to participate, so that each person’s situation will be made present, but at the same time each person will bring back to their own community their experience and the commitment they made in Manila. **Finally, a “post Genfest,”** especially for the Asian young people, which will allow them to testify to a “United Asia for a United World.” This will be a great experience for 800 young people in the Focolare small town of Tagaytay.”

Official site: y4uw.org/genfest