



The dream of a time when weapons will no longer be built and peoples will no longer practice the art of war: this is the biblical prophecy of Isaiah that we are trying to realize already now with the Arsenal of Peace in Turin, the first military arsenal in the world transformed into a reality of peace and solidarity thanks to Sermig, founded by Ernesto Olivero and his wife Maria. In almost 60 years of history, there were hundreds of thousands of people welcomed, development projects in 155 countries on five continents, dozens of peace missions in places marked by war, other Arsenals opened in Brazil, Jordan and Italy. Above all, it's a movement of people, of people of all ages, cultures and religious confessions united by the ideal of goodness that disarms. In the homes of Sermig, this "utopia" is already a reality and the words of peace of this letter, which are born from the true life of the experience of the Arsenal of Peace, are the natural consequence.

PEACE, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

Dear friend,

In the first weeks of March 2022 the Arsenal of Peace was "invaded" by an impressive river of good and generosity to which so many simple citizens, families, associations, schools, parishes, companies, local institutions and from every Region have given life. Indignation and disbelief have shaken consciences, generating a wonderful reaction of solidarity in response to the violence of a wretched war. The outstretched, unarmed hands of all these people of good will reconcile with the sense of humanity, **save the soul of the world**. Over three hundred thousand people from Turin and throughout Italy have so far brought more than one thousand five hundred tons of aid. A great confirmation of the appointment made by the City of Turin in 2008: "Turin City of the Arsenal of Peace".

All these small gestures express from below an extraordinary desire for peace that also becomes an important message for the great ones of the Earth. This is the peace in which we believe, the peace that Giorgio La Pira, Mayor of Florence and great man of dialogue, introduced us by quoting the prophet Isaiah: a time when weapons will be transformed into tools of work and peoples will no longer practice the art of war. It has become our dream, the concrete choice of all of us who have lived the adventure of transforming the old military arsenal of Turin into the Arsenal of Peace.

War is never the solution! We have understood this by helping many countries at war, now Ukraine. I often say that weapons kill seven times.

The first is when they are designed, subtracting resources from research, school, life.

The second because to build them there are intelligences that could devote themselves to development in the scientific, technological and medical fields.

The third because weapons kill without looking anyone in the face, destroy and force millions of people to leave their homes.

The fourth because by shooting they create the conditions for revenge.

The fifth is the most tragic because in a war, exalted soldiers and civilians carry out any nefarious acts on their victims.

The sixth because victims and executioners carry on themselves the unbearable memory of the horrors suffered and committed, even to the point of taking their own lives.

The seventh because the war leaves a trail of resentment and spaces of hatred that prolongs its harmful effects.

But not all the negative consequences of war are here. I am thinking above all of the child soldiers, enlisted to fight, forced to kill to demonstrate their strength. I think of entire generations of children and young people who in the precious years of their growth know only war: they will carry its deep wounds forever. One of them, who experienced the drama of the war in the former Yugoslavia as a child, recently wrote: "War brings only victims and the first victim is the truth."

Precisely for these reasons we will never get used to war and we will continue to fight to counter it, we will continue to work for peace and to seek it with all our strength.

True peace is a fact that comes from the works of justice. It is a world that welcomes every man and woman of any origin and religion because everyone has the right to food, housing, work, care, dignity, education. It is a world in which young people and adults are ready to make their own honesty and righteousness the key to building the common good. It is the understanding that the good that I can do cannot be done by anyone else, because it is my part of good, that it is up to me, it is my responsibility. If I don't do it, no one can do it for me.

This mentality has become our compass and, slowly but surely, has embraced millions of people who have made available time, money, professionalism to wipe away a tear, support those who are weak, without asking for anything in return.

Now it must also become an educational priority by orienting school education, starting from childhood to university. To form oneself and grow in peace means to become responsible citizens and, from a young age, guardians of dialogue and of the dignity of every person.

Our conscience urges us to knock on the door of international organizations born from the peoples' aspiration to peace, so that they guarantee ever more concretely and unreservedly the dignity and fundamental rights of every person, respect and protect minorities and promote equality, ban the use of weapons, have the authority and moral recognition to stop wars and remedy injustices through diplomacy and where necessary through missions of peace. A concrete commitment that helps everyone to understand that the real enemy is hatred and that our future is defended with peace.

If this mentality makes its way into the hearts of many, the world can really change. It is the hope that is born even in the face of the darkest tragedy, the hope that in the face of people in difficulty leads us to always say: "Brother, sister, what can I do for you?"

*Ernesto Olivero
and the Sermig Fraternity*

May 24, 2022