



AMERICA/COLOMBIA – "Schools of reconciliation" are born: initiative of the Church for young people

Medellin (Agenzia Fides) - A contribution to reconciliation and peace in the country is the initiative of the Catholic Church in the districts affected by the phenomenon of criminal gangs: about 70 young people involved in the "war among gangs" or risk being part of illegal armed groups, now have a different option for their lives. Two "Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation" have been established in the municipality of Medellin and in the city of Bello.

"Young people are betting on a process of redefining their life project, without violence. They are trying to overcome those painful or traumatic events that are part of their experience", says a note sent to Fides by one of the co-ordinators of the program of these centers, Magali Taborda Uribe.

The schools are part of a strategy known as "Paz para Todos" (Peace for all) proposed by the Archbishop of Medellin, Mgr. Antonio Ricardo Tobon Restrepo, so that the Church is able to create events and initiatives in order to help achieve peace in the country. Initiatives have been held since October 2013 and have included meetings on the figure of St. Francis and also the pilgrimage to honor Mother Laura in the Metropolitan Cathedral.

The youth social pastoral Office of the Archdiocese of Medellin reports that, before the initiative, according to official data, there were approximately 18,000 at-risk youth crime in the city. Once the process for peace started, entrepreneurs, Catholics and non-Catholics, have offered jobs to these young people who are always more interested in schools of "Forgiveness and Reconciliation". The path is not easy: other young people, in fact, threaten and discourage those who choose to enroll in these schools. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 12/04/2014)