

On the 28th of March the council chamber in Nettuno near Rome hosted the roundtable **"Not walls but bridges: a possible and restorative dialogue between victims and offenders"** created under the European project Building Bridges on Restorative Justice. Promoted and organized by Prison Fellowship Italy Onlus, the initiative sponsored by the City of Nettuno and prepared in collaboration with the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Grace and Santa Maria Goretti and the group of prayer Pentecost RnS, was moderated by Alberto Civitan and hosted contributions of Marcella Clara Reni, chairlady of the association Prison Fellowship Italy, Federico Reggio from the University of Padua, researcher and professor, expert in analysis, dialogue and conflict transformation, Father Giovanni Alberti, rector of the Sanctuary which has shared the reflection on faith and forgiveness talking of Goretti and his killer Alessandro Serenelli who then lived a transformative path that ended in holiness. Various local associations were present: Alzaia Onlus that with Luciana Center deals with women victims of violence and raising awareness with respect to gender; House accommodation Maria Maddalena where Passionist nuns and educators welcome women victims of trafficking and violence; the Association "Volare" which plays a listening service and support for inmates within the prison of Velletri. The invitation to promote these issues came from Reggio who stressed the importance of entering in municipal chambers with projects of this type. The whole initiative, strongly supported by the President Marcella Reni – author of the book "Within the walls of the soul" published by Sabbia Rossa - had the sense of an invitation to make grow as a common good the inspiration of Building Bridges that lies in the wake of the Sycamore Tree Project which has strong Christian roots: developed by Prison Fellowship International, through more than 30 organizations throughout the world, provides that through dialogue restorative action is taken "To repair some of the damage caused by crime and to offer benefits to the victims. "

Building Bridges develops a new intervention starting from the founding ideas of the Sycamore Tree Project because of "the crime can be understood as a deviated behavior that requires a social, and legal response. Victims suffer physical, psychological, financial and social effects after a crime. Some of these effects may be addressed through a restorative dialogue between victims and offenders for the opportunity to share and change perspective, even in an extreme condition of conflict and pain. The idea is to build bridges of hope giving particular space and voice to victims. " "This goal seems impossible - Says a voluntary of Nettuno of Prison Fellowship – because in the imagination of all it is unthinkable that a victim sees an offender as a person to whom develops feelings passing from considering him as a monster, fear up to empathy but it is possible. " The words of Pina, victim of crime who participated in the Sycamore tree project after the brutal killing of her son , tell the sense of all the initiative in which led its vibrant testimony saying that never would have imagined to receive love from the authors of offense met, almost feeling them as children: "... these guys (the prisoners) are people who have made a long journey, tiring and painful, other persons than those of 20 years ago, these people today are able to love more than to do evil, repented of the evil they have done ... I was right to agree to participate in the Sycamore tree Project. Personally I think for some of them it was almost obvious that would end up in the crime seen the hinterland where they were born and grew up ... they gave me friendship, gave me love, respect, they gave me very much, I have kept in contact with them. I met their families ... I suffer for the lack of my son and of my husband , they suffer for the damage that their families have caused, we share this pain too "

Father Giovanni Alberti in his speech said "if there is a person who embodied in advance what the Sycamore tree project is, that is Alessandro (Serenelli) ... in the story of Maria Goretti... Alessandro was convinced like all the prisoners to be right ... But one day passes Marietta .. she goes through a dream .. a prophetic dream, where she says 'Alessandro I have forgiven you', for Alessandro was the beginning of a change in his life ... "

The words of the President of Prison Fellowship Italy ".. Fruit of Justice is Peace ... how can you achieve this Peace? With a different Justice ... an alternative way, where the crime is not only extinguished in a penalty, a fine or deprivation of liberty but it is extinguished by a repair that focuses on people .... "

Sister Elvira Community lodging house of Mary Magdalene: "... victims must seek peace and forgiveness in themselves ..., women forced to trafficking are not prostitutes are victims ..."

Federico Reggio University of Padova emphasized the words of Howard Zehr who is one of the father of Restorative Justice: 'The victim is the great footnote on page in the story of justice' ... Justice, Dialogue, Conflict ... in the world of traditional jurist the juxtaposition of justice, dialogue and conflict can be not necessarily undue, but definitely not necessary for the practice and the criminal theory ... "

**Information on** [www.prisonfellowshipitalia.it](http://www.prisonfellowshipitalia.it), [www.restorative-justice.eu/bb](http://www.restorative-justice.eu/bb)

[buildingbridgeseuropa@gmail.com](mailto:buildingbridgeseuropa@gmail.com)

and on Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/BuildingBridgesItalia?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](https://www.facebook.com/BuildingBridgesItalia?ref=aymt_homepage_panel)