
2004 Assembly Closing

Some Words Spoken at the Closing Ceremony...

We were asked to say something at this moment because of our youth, so we wanted to begin by saying that 'age is a state of mind' and that it has often been the eldest amongst us who have motivated us the most. We would also like to thank the coordinators, speakers and all the EsF members for putting together such an incredible event — muchas gracias!

The Spanish expression for giving birth is 'dar luz' which literally means 'to give light' and it is true that children keep us young, happy and enlightened. They also present to us a responsibility that, in this complex world, is not easy to carry. As Maria Montessori stated in her book *Education and Peace*, 'This task of protecting the child, which is also a task of educating and re-educating adults, is an effort to guard the greatest treasure we possess, one that can guide us toward that light that we sum up in one word: peace.'

We think you'd all agree that every person at this gathering has been an inspiration to others here in attendance. That inspiration has not been based on our age, on how many schools we've started or on where we're from, but simply on the hope generated by combining our energy and directing it towards a common focus: the welfare of all children.

So here we all are, ranging in age from twenty-six to eighty-eight, having travelled from at least twelve countries and although we've come here for the same cause, each of us have come for a different reason: the unique spark in our spirits. During the past three weeks we have listened, learned, discussed, laughed and even cried together and of course the eternal question has arisen: what does it all mean?

As we all begin our journeys of returning to our usual activity, Antonella, Kelly, Gayle and I are certain that our sparks are burning a little bit brighter. We can only hope that each of you feels the fulfilment and enrichment that we feel, with the satisfaction of knowing that we have helped to create a group consciousness of children's needs worldwide and that we have become a part of an active awareness of the need to improve humanity's overall quality of life. It's all of us or none because we are all one people. As Gandhi said, 'You must be the change you wish to see in the world.'

Thank you.

Antonella de Angelis

Meghan Ault Mark

Kelly Anne Webster

Gayle Wood