

“PEACE WITH THE EARTH, PEACE WITH EACH OTHER, PEACE WITHIN”

Organizers of International World Day of Peace El Paso

by: Marie Bianca, OFS

Article 19 of our Rule calls us to be, “Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transformative power of love and pardon.” The question that follows is, “How is that accomplished?”

In late June, I was introduced to an amazing woman who was offering a wonderful gift to The Interfaith Alliance of the Southwest. This woman, Laurie Marshal, is the founder of The Singing Tree Foundation, promoting Unity Through Creativity. She wanted to partner with the Alliance and bring the Singing Tree Project to El Paso. It is the hope of both Laurie and the Interfaith Alliance of the Southwest to have the City of El Paso become declared an International City of Peace. On September 21, 2022, at Keystone Heritage Park Botanical Gardens in El Paso, from 12 PM to 8 PM, the gardens opened its doors to this wonderful celebration. The event welcomed vendors that promote peace, singers, dancers, speakers, and holistic healers, and promoted Peace Literacy.

Speakers spanned the world, from Mexico to Afghanistan. It was an honor to walk with these brothers and sisters from around the world, each bringing their unique story of peace. A local high school, Loreto Academy, asked the AP English class to speak to “Who is your Peace Hero.” They were asked to write essays about their peace hero, and the winners were invited to read their piece.

Each essay reflected a deep understanding of their world and most often of their families. Grandma Bea, (Beatriz Villegas), a native of the Ilhuicatlhulli-Bea tribe of



Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, brought the opening ceremony alive with her message of peace through song and chant in her native tongue. Later, Neema Soratgar from Afghanistan spoke of her quest for peace after fleeing from her country to come to El Paso to live in peace and work in the field of Research on Women’s Studies at the University of Texas-El Paso. Tigua dancers claiming the native lands in and around Las Cruces/El Paso danced for peace in traditional form. And the list of speakers went on, too many to list, each carrying the message of importance of communication, respect, and compassion for the earth, for each other and within ourselves.

An important expression of the day was the beautiful mural painted on one of the back walls of the park. This mural was worked on by members of the Interfaith team. Laurie Marshal did a very large piece of the mural, and each attendee was asked to add it to the wall of the Nectarine Tree. Blossoms, leaves, and birds were hand decorated by everyone and attached to the mural, to be adhered permanently later. It is Ms. Marshall’s belief that, with our combined efforts, we as a community can build a beautiful work of art displaying God’s presence, peace and joy in the world.

We are capable and called to do just that, working together building peace in the world. It did not matter what faith you practice, the color of your skin, the language you speak. The goal was unity and peace—something we all strive for in this world. Can you use your creativity to build peace in our world? When you do, your light shines even brighter. The world needs all the light we can shine with the Creator into this world.



“I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.”

Rabindranath Tagore