

Promotio Iustitiae

Agents of reconciliation in a broken world

A mission of reconciliation and justice

Miguel Cruzado sj

Reconciliation and justice

Rafael Velasco sj

Toward an economy of reconciliation

Matthew Carnes sj

Challenges for a Human Rights Approach to move towards Reconciliation

Cedric Prakash sj

Reconciliation in the Present Political Order

Frank Turner sj

Reconciliation, peace and political conflict

Rigobert Minani Bihuzo sj

Reconciliation and migration: A process that sets us in motion

Alberto Ares Mateos sj

Reconciliation: A Dialogic Praxis of a Kenotic Church

Jojo M. Fung sj

Reconciliation with creation

Pedro Walpole sj

Reconciliation and religious communalism

Anthony Dias sj



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Editorial

Patxi Álvarez SJ

The last two Congregations wished to frame our mission of faith and justice in terms of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a broad theological concept that describes the work of God, “who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor 5:18-19).

It deals with the task of reestablishing right relationships with God, with one another and with creation (GC 35, d. 3, n. 12). Reconciliation is “fulfilled in the Kingdom of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.” (GC 36, d. 1, n. 3). It consists in building bridges between the tensions that are tearing apart the social fabric of our societies. This is particularly relevant to border zones, where human dignity is being compromised and the conditions for a just society have been broken.

In the words of the last Congregation: “This reconciliation is always a work of justice, a justice discerned and enacted in local communities and contexts. The Cross of Christ and our sharing in it are also at the center of God’s work of reconciliation. This mission can lead to conflict and death, as we have witnessed in the lives of many of our brothers. While we speak of three forms of reconciliation, all three are, in reality, one work of God, interconnected and inseparable.” (GC 36, d. 1, n. 21).

We are summoned to be agents of reconciliation in a broken world. The latest edition of *Promotio Iustitiae* visits some of these fault lines in our world, and sheds light on what it means to work there from a perspective of reconciliation: fundamentalism, political conflict, migrants and refugees, indigenous cultures, and those dispossessed by this economic system... Each author, a specialist in their field, has tried to demonstrate how this work for reconciliation adds value.

The result is a panoramic picture of the work of reconciliation which can help us to better comprehend the scope of the last two Congregations’ summons. The articles allow us to discover new aspects of our work, enriching the justice dimension that should be present in all of our ministries, and it re-roots the mission in solid Scriptural foundations. We trust that these texts will help us to continue responding each day, with greater creativity and depth, to the challenges of a faith that does justice.

Original Spanish
Translation Nils Sundermann



A Mission of Reconciliation and Justice

Miguel Cruzado SJ

Lima, Peru

The mission of the Society of Jesus is its *raison d'être*. It concerns not only what we do, but also the way in which we progress, live and direct our discernment and community life. Mission is the response to the Lord's call and it involves life, community and ministries. General Congregation 36 (GC 36) wanted to remind us that "For the First Companions, life and mission, rooted in a discerning community, were profoundly inter-related".

One reason for GC 36 to recall and insist on this may be that living in coherence with the aforementioned inter-relation – life, community, and apostleship – has proved difficult for the Society, although it remains so central to the Jesuit identity. Our religious, personal and community life exist in constant tension with the priorities and requirements of our works and ministries. Our communities, far too often, are not spaces of discernment of the mission. The works and projects become institutionalised and professionalised in a manner which deprives them of the flexibility to respond to an ever-renewed discernment of the mission. Institutional management causes us forget that the works are not the mission; rather, they exist to serve it.

The reasons behind these difficulties can be very diverse; from the lack of a real discernment of the mission leading us to confuse the Kingdom's objectives with institutional mediations or particular projects, to the inevitable requirements and tensions of a healthy distinction between work and community, necessary for our life of poverty and the strengthening of our collaboration in the mission.

Addressing today the challenges and difficulties in the relationship between life, community and mission is central to applying the Society's mission. The GC understood it thus. Therefore, applying the perspective of reconciliation and justice in the mission means addressing the way it orients our works and ministries, life, discernment, and way of moving forward. When the General Congregation calls on the entire Society to emphasise the link between reconciliation and justice, what does it mean for our life, community and ministries? What conversions are we summoned to make in our personal and community way of life? What would the expected emphases and options be in our apostolic activity? What are the implications for how we move forward and give reason to our presence in the world? These questions should be part of our reflection on the mission in coming years.

The Mission of Reconciliation and Justice

A second point to consider with respect to the mission that was explicitly accentuated by GC 36 is the relationship between reconciliation and justice. The very title of the decree on life and mission expresses this: *summoned to a mission of "Reconciliation and Justice"*. The GC didn't want to leave any ambiguity with regards to the strong link between the two – reconciliation work of justice – due to the problematic relationship between the language of reconciliation and

that of justice in some contexts. The importance of reconciliation, for example, has been presented in opposition to the requirements of justice in some processes of political reconciliation. The theologies of reconciliation, in some parts of the Church, have been presented as alternatives to the theologies of liberation and their emphasis in justice. The language of reconciliation has most frequently been linked to interpersonal relations and religious reflections, while that of justice is more social and draws on the diverse human and social sciences. This has allowed the mission of reconciliation to be perceived as a retreat from the macro social dimension of the mission and from the recourse of human and social sciences to reflect on the mission.

On making explicit the strong bond between Reconciliation and Justice, GC 36 is clear that it doesn't intend to replace one with the other. Reconciliation is not a sugar-coated version of justice, nor is it the new synthesis of faith and justice; rather it is the emphasis of a new perspective on justice, experienced in the service of the faith and as an absolute requirement of it, for this historical period of exacerbated violence and conflict.

This is not a summons to a new mission, but a perspective on the mission which consequently ought to move the Society to revise its life, presence and manner of executing its ministries.

I will mention some implications of this perspective on the mission, for the Society.

Reconciliation and Justice: Peace at the frontiers of Violence

The emphasis on the link between reconciliation and justice is a call to see and address the heartrending situations of conflict experienced in many parts of the world. These especially affect, as per usual, the poorest and most vulnerable. GC 36 responds to a historical context marred by conflicts and violence, which were already present during GC 35 but which have not ceased to grow since. In fact, the document "Witnesses of Friendship and Reconciliation: A message and a prayer for Jesuits living in zones of war and conflict", complements the message of the decree on Reconciliation and Justice, it was said in the Congregation hall. The message highlights reconciliation as a mission at the frontiers of war and peace.

In the current global situation, faced with the proliferation of conflicts between religions, cultures and nations, direct work for peace becomes urgent, as does close and active solidarity with those who suffer most in situations of conflict. Wars and all blood-filled conflicts offend God and destroy the planet and humanity in it. They are always a scene of harrowing injustice for everyone, above all those who are most vulnerable and least important in societies; those one can wound with greatest ease and impunity.

Conflicts exist in geographical spaces, but also in spiritual and social ones. Given that we are being asked to discern how best to contribute to the construction of peace in the frontiers of violence, the Society, responding coherently to the summons of the GC, should increase its presence at these frontiers of violence.

At the same time, each community and work called to respond to violence and places of conflict should identify where they exist both in their local environment, as well as on a global level: today's wars tend to have global implications and ramifications.

Building a new culture of peace becomes a priority at every level of our life and mission. The personal and community life of Jesuits must bear testament to our commitment to cultivating a culture of peace, which is rooted in local cultures and constructed daily, shoulder-to-shoulder with others. We must educate ourselves in the peaceful solution of conflicts -

“overcoming what divides us”, and “being concerned for one another”, as the GC says (D.1, n. 13).

The Society’s ministries in the world – pastoral, social, educational – should also seriously consider contributing to the cultivation of a culture of peace which, as Felipe McGregor sj proposes, promotes the practice of dialogue and compromise in the political sphere, animates tolerant and welcoming attitudes in social life, and forms an awareness which holds discrimination and violence to be unacceptable.

Reconciliation and Justice: Inclusion at the frontiers of Disregard

Reconciliation and Justice also have to do with building fair ways of organising shared life and constructing inclusive relations and recognition of the other. The GC asks us to continue responding to situations of systemic violence which are at the root of scandalous forms of suffering and injustice experienced by millions of our brothers and sisters.

The path of reconciliation – the construction of just relations – in situations of systemic violence, where there aren’t any warring factions to reconcile but visibly impersonal systems which exclude or marginalise, requires an attitude of disruption that will seem to compromise the apparent peace. The success of systemic violence consists in its normalisation, in it being presented as inevitable, and any challenge to it will seem to challenge the apparent peace. The culture of peace we must build does not consist in pacific coexistence with injustice or impunity; rather it requires disruption and denunciation of the normalised systems of injustice. There is no mistaking the Society’s vocation for justice for the part of humanity that suffers and its challenging of structures of injustice. As Pope Francis reminded us at the 1st Meeting with Popular Movements: “The scandal of poverty cannot be addressed by promoting strategies of containment that only tranquilise the poor and render them tame and inoffensive.” and continues: “this system can no longer be endured. We must change it [...] with courage but also with intelligence, with tenacity but without fanaticism, with passion yet without violence.”¹

GC 36 outlines three forms of suffering in the world to which we are particularly called to respond. In fact, they corresponded to a large number of the postulates sent to the GC by the rest of the Society: forced displacements; growing inequality and marginalization of youths, vulnerable people and peoples; and ethnic-religious-political intolerance. They are forms of suffering, areas of injustice, which particularly challenge us today.

This renewed commitment by the Society to the frontiers of justice and to comprehending them as forms of suffering, reaffirming our desire to be close to the poor and vulnerable, is significant in a context where communities close to the world of the poor are shrinking or disappearing across almost all of the Society’s Provinces. Our communities’ presences and ways of life are less and less a sign of rupture with the dominant ways of life in the world. How does our Society’s way of life challenge a global system which evangelically speaking “can no longer be endured”, in the words of Pope Francis? If our way of life doesn’t challenge the culture of intolerance, fear and disposability, not only will we be less credible in our critique, but we will grow ever more accustomed to it. If we do not renew our spaces of friendship with the poor, we will grow ever more distant to them in real and effective terms.

¹ Can be found in

https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141028_incontro-mondiale-movimenti-popolari.html, accessed April 2017.

The Society, people and communities, in our reduced number and frank weakness, must find a renewed and noteworthy way to announce, through the example of our lives, our closeness and commitment to the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

The promotion of justice, which is already part of the identity and the activities of the Society's works and ministries, requires renewed discernments to incorporate the call to address the three aforementioned forms of suffering, which share a common root of fear and disregard for the other: those who are displaced, the indigenous peoples, and those of other cultures of religions.

We would have to discern and reflect on how to understand and what to propose to a humanity ever more divided, which builds walls, exiles people, disregards those who are different. What is it that causes so much fear and contempt? How can we build bridges where walls are erected? How can people be accepted in the very places that they are exiled or held in disregard?

We would have to discern our local and global responses, defining clear universal apostolic preferences to orient our responses across regions and levels of the mission.

Reconciliation and Justice: A Universality to reconcile the world

Reconciliation is both a present-day ministry and a spiritual horizon of everything that we do in the Society and Church. It is a mission in the world and an eschatological good at once fulfilled and yet to be fulfilled in Christ. It is important to mention this eschatological aspect to the task of God's reconciliation without confusing it with that of the diverse ministries of reconciliation, albeit the latter form part of Him, as does our entire mission.

The fourth decree of GC 32 affirms: "The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. *For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another.*" (GC 32, D. 4, n. 2). The Faith-Justice binomial forms part of the broader reality of reconciling humanity with God. The promise of integral reconciliation and justice is realised when we "preach Jesus Christ and the mystery of reconciliation He brings. It is Christ who, in the last analysis, opens the way to the complete and definitive liberation of mankind for which we long from bottom of our hearts." (GC 32, D. 4, n. 27).

Mankind's deepest desires are fulfilled by reconciling humanity in God which corresponds to "the complete and definitive liberation of mankind for which we long from bottom of our hearts": reconciliation in God is not realised through one particular religious culture, rather through the liberating obedience to the deepest hopes of peoples and cultures.

The task of evangelisation as "reconciliation" presents us with the radicality of the mystery of the incarnation in the work of evangelisation. We listen to the truth in the parables of wisdom of the world's peoples, religions, and cultures; we feel how our truth is part of all of theirs. Fr. Adolfo Nicolás sj insisted that in the Church we need to listen to the voices of wisdom in the world's diverse cultures², making a deep dialogue possible that allows us to recognise our common humanity through recognising our diversity.

The Society should feel itself called to renew its work of evangelisation with a view to reconciling humanity with the manner in which life's religious dimension is being

² *Razón y Fe* 2016, v. 274, n. 1415, pp. 121-131.

experienced and communicated. We are unsettled by the crises in religions around the world, invaded by intolerance and violence, challenged by secularisation or indifference; to face this, the task of evangelisation requires profound renewal, not simply new techniques of communication or inter-relation.

We Jesuits, our communities and ministries, must assume the risk of giving reason to faith, without contenting ourselves with silence, nor resorting to communicating or conserving our religious culture, but above all by listening to the feelings that humankind today is formulating (and encountering) in its journey. We must recognise too the signs of God in how humanity orders and makes sense of life today. We must assume God's communication in the world: creating, healing, liberating, and giving signs of His presence.

How do we renew our work of preaching the faith? How do we listen to ourselves and to God's signs in the world? Furthermore, how do we question ways of living and communicating the faith which make use of power – institutional or cultural – to achieve pastoral outcomes? Pope Francis is committed in a radical way to this task. Discernment in the transmission and living of the faith at the level of the universal Church led by the Pope is an immense revolution in the Church, which corresponds to this desire to reconcile humanity with God, recognising the Spirit's presence in it. It is a complicated and delicate task, which the Society could carry out with greater creativity, enthusiasm and propensity to risk.

In conclusion, the mission of reconciliation and justice to which GC 36 directs us means constructing peace where there is conflict, establishing just relations to combat structurally organized exclusion, and collaborating with the mystery of God acting in humanity for the reconciliation of the world.

GC 36 reminds us that without a concern for peace in the midst of death one cannot build a new humanity for whom injustice becomes intolerable. Indolence can never foster humanity.

We continue to be called to question, through our actions and lifestyle, cultures and systems that generate exclusion and death. Renewal is required in this same mission as always, because the conditions of exclusion are ever more urgent. We continue to be called to be close, in real and affective solidarity, to the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

We are asked to radically renew our confidence in the action of the spirit in the world, in diverse cultures and religions, to radically renounce the use of any type of power to communicate with God. Reconciliation, as with forgiveness and love, is not built on obligation or imposition, but on communication, trust and willingness.

Finally, GC 36 insistently reminds us that our lives are the mission. Every Jesuit in this mission of reconciliation is called to reconcile with himself, with his brothers and with God. We can't reconcile others without working to reconcile our own fragmented lives and embattled communities. A reconciliation and justice that isn't a mission lived and discerned in our communities will be nothing more than work. We won't be credible. Our actions will run the risk of being mere adaptations, more or less prudent, of words and endeavours that we are already carrying out.

*Original Spanish
Translation Nils Sundermann*



Reconciliation and Justice from the perspective of the decree “Companions in a mission of Reconciliation and Justice” from General Congregation 36

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Introduction

Reconciliation and Justice appear as the binomial that describes our life and mission today, according to Decree 1 of General Congregation 36. Already in the title, this document puts our mission in those terms.

The relationship between reconciliation and justice is not new. Already in GC 32, it is stated that reconciliation with God is inextricably linked with justice, “In brief: The Mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of Justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another” (D. 4, n. 2). GC 35 again takes up the theme of reconciliation, in the decree on our mission, referring to a triple reconciliation; with God, with others, and with creation (GC 35, D. 3)

What is “novel” in this decree from GC 36 is that the concept of Justice is reincorporated into a parallel relationship with that of reconciliation, somewhat in harmony with Decree 4 from GC 32. Perhaps GC 35 – and even GC 34 – in the context of bitter historical divisions over what might have been considered a “dangerous” radicalisation of the faith-justice binomial, preferred to make other emphases: GC 34 emphasised dialogue with other religions and cultures, while GC 35 put greater emphasis on reconciliation in relation to borders. Of no insignificant number were those who felt (we felt) that in this respect both congregations abandoned somewhat the radicality of our Mission of promotion of Justice.

Aside from this, there exists an issue of context: in various Latin American countries, the term reconciliation is not without its problems, as it was employed by dictatorial governments who systematically violated human rights, massacred, tortured, and kidnapped. They would later proclaim – sometimes with the pastoral support of the Church hierarchies – a reconciliation which was essentially a self-pardon, so that the crimes against humanity would not be investigated (to evade Justice). In this context, for the Society to speak solely of reconciliation could seem somewhat ambiguous and even, to some extent, disappointing.

This time, GC 36, in its central document on our life and mission, assures from the very title that reconciliation does not stand alone and that – for us as Jesuits – it is always united with

Justice. The document clearly affirms: “This reconciliation is always a work of justice, a justice discerned and enacted in local communities and contexts” (21).

But this “return to Justice” doesn’t appear to be a “return to the 70s”, nor is it a mere “historical reparation”; rather it is an update to include other elements like, for example, our personal and community way of life.

This latter deserves a more detailed analysis, as it captures something of the spirit of our times: grand words alone mean little, the same going for apostolic works or selfless labour. Many outside the Society and even outside the Church are doing similar things. What moves today is the testimony of one’s life, real options: not just concerning whom we serve, but also who our neighbours are, who our masters are, how our way of life is consistent with what we proclaim. In a time when experience and testimony are so important, the justice that we proclaim should be mirrored in the testimony of our communal life. This justice made living – and community life – clearly endorses the justice of our proclamation of the Kingdom (which is Community)

Structure and content of the document

Fundamental Theological Proposition

The proposition in the document’s introduction is that in the midst of this reality which “has been groaning in labour pains” (Romans 8:22), God is reconciling the world through Jesus, and in the style of Jesus, who assumed poverty and lived with the poor to proclaim among them the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of Justice and Peace.

Here we find the first theological nexus between Reconciliation and Justice. The reconciliatory action of God, in the three dimensions of this one reconciliation, is related to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and its Justice, in the style of Jesus, centred in the poor. The document says: “Yet, looking at reality with the eyes of faith...We recognize the signs of God’s work, of the great ministry of reconciliation God has begun in Christ, fulfilled in the Kingdom of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.” (3)

The image of the companions in Venice

One of the document’s distinctive features is the preponderant place it affords to our way of life, as a key element in these times. Not only is it referring to the personal way of life of each and every Jesuit, but also to shared life, the Jesuit community.

Perhaps from here originates the importance of the image of the infant Society’s first companions, in Venice. They proclaimed the Gospel and prayed living in community close to the poor. Their way of life was a fundamental part of the proclamation. In this image, the GC 36 finds an Ignatian root to affirm that Reconciliation and Justice begin with a way of life close to the poor: “We Jesuits today are called to live in the same way, as priests, brothers, and those in formation who all share the same mission.” (5)

Real closeness to the poor as a way of life

In harmony with the other General Congregations – in particular GC 32 – the document insists that this mission of reconciliation and justice makes our real closeness to the poor necessary. The document signals this in a number of moments, in particular in the segments on the life of the community and in the one referring to the mission.

This real closeness with the poor is to learn from them a wisdom which the world ignores and dismisses. "Such an attitude runs counter to the usual way of the world, in which, as Qoheleth says, 'the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded'. With the poor, we can learn what hope and courage mean." (15).

This real closeness to the poor is to put ourselves at their service: "... we hear Christ summon us anew to a ministry of justice and peace, serving the poor and the excluded and helping build peace" (25).

The closeness with the poor is to create "one human family through the struggle for justice" (31).

To learn, serve and build together a new human community; this is triple objective of closeness with the poor, those in whom Christ reflects his face. The authenticity test of our familiarity with God is, definitively, encounter with Christ "in the suffering, vulnerable faces of people" (20).

The reconciliation accomplished in Christ is centred in the Cross. Therein lies the Christological necessity to be close to those crucified, in whom Christ reveals his face, and to be ready to assume the consequences. "This mission can lead to conflict and death, as we have witnessed in the lives of many of our brothers." (20). Here our martyrs are remembered and it is a memory which alerts us to the seriousness of our words. The martyrs are a captivating and subversive memory: Christ's testimony unites the work of reconciliation and Justice with the personal testimony of giving up one's life.

Community

It's noteworthy that rather than drawing together identity and mission at the outset, as was traditionally done, the document begins by reflecting on community life as a space for discernment with open horizons.

In a world broken by injustice, announcing a new way of life in Christ means attempting a new way of living. It means seeking the Kingdom of God and its justice in our communities, mirroring it in some form. It is clearly stated "It is our union with one another in Christ that testifies to the Good News more powerfully than our competences and abilities." (7). This is a challenge, but fundamentally it is grace, and for this reason the Congregation expresses it as a request: "In our world that knows too much division, we ask God to help our communities become "homes" for the Reign of God" (13).

Moreover, this community cannot be evangelical if it is not close to the poor – who are friends of God – nor if it won't allow itself to be taught by them. In this mission of reconciliation and justice, the search for God and His will, community, and the poor are interrelated. Number 15 expresses this with clarity and cogency. Given its importance, and at the risk of being redundant, we will cite it in its entirety: "It is critical to emphasize the continuing relevance of the real closeness of the First Companions to the poor. The poor challenge us to return constantly to what is essential to the Gospel, to what really gives life, and to recognize that which merely burdens us. As Pope Francis reminds us: we are called to find Christ in the poor, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to understand them, and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them. Such an attitude runs counter to the usual way of the world, in which, as Qoheleth says, 'the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded.' With the poor, we can learn what hope and courage mean."

As we can see, community and closeness to the poor are two fundamental elements of this new way of life. Just as we demonstrated that the option for the poor is founded in a theological principle, so too is community life of theological importance, as a reality and as a sign of the Kingdom of God, which is Community.

Human beings have broken the basic bond of kinship and as such – as Latin American theology affirms – the rupture of fraternity finds root in the same basis as all alienation. In this predatory culture, men and women are disposable. We live in a throwaway culture – as Pope Francis signals in *Laudato Si'* – and this culture establishes parameters to life which we as Jesuits are not immune to. For this reason it is necessary to give birth to a new culture of the Kingdom; and this culture is communal. In this sense, the community is called to be a kind of sign, a home which demonstrates the way of life of the Kingdom. For this reason the document affirms “In our individualistic and competitive age, we should remember that the community plays a very special role since it is a privileged place of apostolic discernment.”(8) and “... because these fraternal bonds proclaim the Gospel, it is itself a mission” (9).

Identity

The segment referring to our identity is the shortest, and it is a summons to return to our spiritual origins – the Exercises and the Constitutions – with a merciful tone. When dealing with identity, our experience of God based in the Exercises is tied to the experience of mercy which makes us humble and forms us with feelings and Christ’s options (cf. 18). This is why the document highlights that for us, Jesuits, “compassion is action, an action discerned together”. This compassionate relationship with the Crucifix and the crucified moves us to action. From this place emerges our mission with Christ Reconciler

Mission

While this mission of reconciliation presents itself in three aspects – with God, with other people, and with creation – it remains one work of reconciliation (cf. 21). And in this reconciliation we see the fundamental role played by the struggle for justice, as it is injustice which breaks the relationship of fraternity between cultures, communities, people, and with creation itself. For this reason the Congregation highlights: “Reflecting on these, we hear Christ summon us anew to a ministry of justice and peace, serving the poor and the excluded and helping build peace.” (25).

When speaking about our mission with Christ Reconciler, clear summonses emerge to struggle for a just world: the forced displacement of people – migrants, refugees – (26); communities marginalized by injustices and inequalities (27); the victims of fundamentalist violence (28). We are invited to create a culture of hospitality, to fight for the full application of human rights and an integral ecology, and to build a culture of peace alongside members of other religious confessions.

The inspiration of Francis

The reiterated references to Pope Francis throughout the document are no accident. The leadership of Francis has driven the Jesuits to take up again, with less trepidation, the flag of the Justice of the Kingdom, which is essential for reconciliation between peoples and with creation. The references to his speech at the Congregation and to *Laudato Si'* are quite demonstrative.

Conclusion

The mission of Reconciliation and Justice is not only work, it involves a new way of life, close to the poor, learning from them, giving voice to their word, accompanying and allowing ourselves to be affected. It involves us somehow giving life in our communities to the Good News which we proclaim. We live this mission by being – as were the first companions – men who search for the will of God in their lives, not only individually, but as an apostolic community. We live it as men who establish new interconnections and thus live the mission in a new way, carried by the spirituality of the Exercises, putting first the means which unite us with God, as instruments; close to the poor, learning from them what it means to “seek first God’s Kingdom and his justice”.

It could be said that in this document there is a return to the intuitions found in GC 32, but with greater modesty, assimilating the passing of time and all that left us with wounds and lessons. Faith and Justice today is read as Reconciliation and Justice. What we do matters, our works and our apostolic options, but there is greater emphasis on the how. Greater importance is assigned to the testimony of community life.

The document delicately maintains a prophetic prodding with respect to our option for the poor, calling for us to be genuinely close to the poor and to centre our options in Christ who reconciles the world by making himself poor.

This document from the GC 36 represents in some way the distilled products of the years subsequent to GC 32. It is a calling to the same mission as always, with great desires, but perhaps more modest pretensions than the one held decades before. Companions in a mission of Reconciliation and Justice is an invitation to attempt together the audacity of the possible.

*Original Spanish
Translation Nils Sundermann*



Toward an Economy of Reconciliation

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Solidarity and shared purpose – both within and across nations – seem to be in short supply in the current world economy. Nevertheless, the current state of affairs may offer an important opportunity for thinking in creative, new ways about what an economy based on solidarity and reconciliation might entail.

The year 2016 saw an unprecedented swing in views of worldwide economic relations; at no time in the last seventy years has the basic orientation of the economy been more widely questioned. With the vote of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union and the rise of nationalistic political contenders in many countries, the seeming consensus toward a liberal capitalist model of economic relations – in which open trade and free competition was expected to yield shared prosperity – has shown fundamental fissures. Longstanding concerns about equity and inclusion have been joined by a growing rejection of the cosmopolitan worldview that liberalism seemed to embrace. For the first time, perhaps, thinkers from across the political spectrum have come to see the regnant economic model as broken in either big or small ways.

The liberal model held sway for nearly all of the postwar era, promising to foster efficiency and productivity, and to bind nations together through trade agreements and fluid financial flows. This open model delivered significant growth: at no point in human history have as many people moved out of abject poverty. This is a massive accomplishment. But the model did not benefit all people equally. Nor did it ensure their stability in better circumstances. Instead, the separation between the most prosperous and least prosperous members of society has grown in the majority of countries around the world. Middle-class status has proven remarkably tenuous, with frequent layoffs and wages subject to volatility and the loss of value through inflation. Thus, the economy that produced such incredible growth was accompanied by a growing social breach of inequality.

One response has been growing nationalism, emphasizing a perceived need to protect national interests over collective interests and, in many cases, directing resources toward majority groups at the expense of minorities. Seeing other nations as rivals, and migrants from those nations as less deserving and in some ways suspect, this instinct seeks to go it alone and take care of oneself (or one's nation) first. It is individualism writ large, at the national level, and it replicates itself in individualism writ small, at the personal and group levels for ethnic and religious majority populations. The result is an ever greater fracturing and fragmentation of social bonds both globally and locally.

Yet an alternative response is to propose an economy of solidarity, and to achieve it, an economy of reconciliation. This is the response proposed by the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, and by Pope Francis, and it both builds upon, and challenges, the existing liberal economic model. It affirms the efficiency and productivity of individual effort in the market, while also noting the essential role for states and international cooperation in fostering inclusive participation in economic and social life. It links care of persons and care of our common home, the earth, together in an integral way. And it calls for a concerted effort not just to make future growth more equitable and sustainable, but to repair the broken relationships that currently exist. This is a bold and far-reaching project, and it will admittedly need much further elaboration than can be sketched out here. But these brief lines here hope to make a modest contribution to that effort, and to spark thinking and creative action to address the glaring divisions of our age.

What might an economy of reconciliation look like? Most fundamentally, it is based on twin foundations. The first is the dignity and worth of each human being, created by God and intended to flourish through the use of each person's unique gifts and abilities. And the second is the affirmation that such flourishing occurs in what is called the common good. As developed richly in Catholic social teaching, the common good is more than simply the summation of the individual goods enjoyed by various members of society. It necessarily involves a social good, the good of the society as a whole, in which the needs of the poorest in society, as well as the well-being of the environment and the well-being of future generations, are pursued simultaneously.

In many ways, this vision is consistent with the postwar liberal economic model. Individual creativity, initiative, and work are valued both as ends in themselves and for the positive contribution they make to overall growth and productivity. And likewise, the gains that come through exchange and collaboration are seen to play a crucial role in promoting shared growth and a shared sense of community at the national and international level. Societies that enable all their members to contribute, as possible given their age and health and other conditions, reap gains in not just their bonds of comity but also in their bottom line output, because they exclude the contributions of no one.

But an economy of solidarity and reconciliation also recognizes that human beings are by nature diverse, and by social construction they are unequal. They are born with varied gifts and they grow up in conditions of widely divergent opportunities and resources. This asymmetry, which has been reified in longstanding social structures, has been further exacerbated in the last three decades through an inequitable distribution of capital. Wealth has become concentrated in the hands of a small minority of the world's population; nearly half the world's population has no assets to call their own. In addition, the burden of the use of the earth's resources has been uneven, with some experiencing the effects of environmental degradation, climate change, and pollution far more acutely than others. These asymmetries have often built upon, and reinforced, existing social hierarchies of race, ethnicity, gender, and religion. And finally, these hierarchies are reflected in, and reinforced by, unequal relations of power in the political sphere.

An economy of solidarity and reconciliation thus must seek to respond not to an ideal or hypothetical set of social relations, but to the current reality of widely divergent starting points and outcomes. To do so, it necessarily recognizes that an active effort must be made to address these asymmetries; the market model, of itself, has not shown an ability to sufficiently ensure access or opportunity to all human beings. Some further action – driven not just by the self-interest of those with resources, but by a decisive “preferential option” – must be undertaken to actively promote the opportunities and well-being of those whose birth or

circumstances have hindered or marginalized their well-being. And among these, particular attention must reach out to those who have not shared in the prosperity of recent years, and especially those that have been dislocated or harmed by it.

Some elements of an economy of solidarity and reconciliation are already well recognized, but they require significant expansion and improvement. Basic health care and quality education are two of the best, proven investments societies can make to increase the health and well-being of their citizens. In particular, preventative health care services, such as immunizations and regular check-ups, especially for expectant mothers and young children, greatly increase the likelihood of healthy births and enhance physical and cognitive development. Adults, too, benefit greatly from ready access to doctors for preventative services and counseling on diet and exercise; they stay healthier longer in life and are less likely to suffer catastrophic health events and need for extended care. They are able to lead productive lives and contribute to the needs of their families. Yet too many countries are either unable, or unwilling, to provide these services. An economy of solidarity recognizes that health care is a lifetime need that is difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to provide for herself or himself. Rather, shared mechanisms of insurance – often coordinated or managed by the state – are necessary so that all can be adequately protected and enabled to realize their full potential.

Similarly, education is central to an economy of solidarity. Such education needs to be universal, of high quality, and attuned to the needs of local economies. It also should draw on, and encourage, the cultivation of the best of our humanity, embracing not just productive skills but also the wonders of the arts and sciences, sparking our curiosity and intellectual wonder. And increasingly, education will be a life-long need. As markets rapidly shift and new jobs are both destroyed and created, individuals need opportunities to expand and enhance their skill sets during their lifetimes. New technologies are forces for tremendous creativity, but they also bring disruptions and displacement. An economy of solidarity will thus take into account education not only for the young, although this has a special priority, but also seek to expand opportunities for mid-career and older workers to pursue new skills and learning and to grow intellectually throughout their lifetime.

The recent experience of several countries around the world has pointed the way toward policies that can increase the use and benefits of both health care and education. First, states have made productive use of carefully targeted and designed transfer programs. One strand of these, called conditional cash transfers, provide small monthly cash payments to families that ensure their children receive regular medical care and immunizations and that keep their children enrolled and present in school. These payments offset the cost of time or work forgone in attending to doctor's appointments or going to school, and they ensure that the costs of basic supplies like uniforms and notebooks do not prevent a child from attending school. They have been shown to increase the number of years the students stay in school (rather than prematurely entering the workforce), increased the nutrition level in the family, and they are associated with improved health throughout childhood. And they do so at a relatively low cost, especially when compared with spending on traditional social programs.

Yet the state is not the only actor to play an important role in the economy of solidarity and reconciliation. Private sector actors and non-governmental organizations have embraced a variety of credit solutions that make financial resources available to small producers who would otherwise be left outside the banking market. These have unleashed incredible creativity and productivity, in an entrepreneurial spirit, for people whose lives had been on the economic margins, especially women. Expanding access to credit, and providing financial and business education – as well as legal protections against predatory lending – for those

who make use of it, has allowed a new dynamism to emerge. It has the potential to do even more.

But even more radically, an economy of solidarity and reconciliation may very well require a further step. It might involve a need for an explicit recognition of, and even apology for, the significant harm that has been done to social relations and to the planet in the name of the economy. If our world is indeed more fractured than perhaps at any other time in recent decades, then a concerted effort must be made to address that fracture (or set of fractures). And like all meaningful reconciliations, it will require a firm commitment to make amends. This need not be a kind of finger-pointing or vilification of any particular group. Instead, it would involve a solidarity and shared effort to ensure not just the inclusion, but the centrality, of those previously left out or displaced.

An economy of solidarity would actually place these people and the environments in which they live at the center of economic discussions – most notably women, the indigenous, and refugees. Indeed, Pope Francis has highlighted in *Laudato Si'* that such people should be the protagonists and “principal dialogue partners” in addressing the economy. Real choices, with real costs, to address their needs and the needs of our planet, would take precedence over others that could benefit those who are already secure and healthy. Shared sacrifice, and even a kind of reparations, might very well be necessary to achieve social reconciliation and to together restore and replenish our planet’s ecosystem. And it is likely that consumption will need to be modified so that our use of natural resources is sustainable for future generations.

An economy of solidarity and reconciliation would thus mark an important departure from much of the existing liberal model and its excesses. While preserving an appreciation for human work and creativity, it necessarily adds a sense of responsibility to ensure that all people – who are born diverse and shaped by their social circumstances – have access to the opportunity to develop their bodies and minds and families fully. It sees both the private and public sector, as well as civil society, as essential to this effort. And it adds a crucial additional task: to address the broken world we have inherited, both socially and environmentally. The test of an economy of solidarity and reconciliation will be seen in its ability to respond to the real needs of a new set of protagonists. Their voices will create new opportunities, and will help set the tone for a new model of economic life.

Original English



Challenges for a Human Rights Approach to move towards Reconciliation

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About a month before his assassination, Jesuit Fr. Rutilio Grande in a sermon said, "I'm quite aware that very soon the Bible and the gospel won't be allowed to cross our borders. *We'll only get the bindings, because all the pages are subversive.* And I think that if Jesus himself crossed the border to Chalatenango, they wouldn't let him in. They would accuse the man... of being a rabble-rouser, a foreign Jew, one who confused the people with exotic and foreign ideas, ideas against democracy – that is, against the wealthy minority, the clan of Cains! Brothers and sisters, without any doubt, they would crucify him again!"

Grande was very clear about his mission. He was deeply influenced by the spirit of Vatican II and the articulation of the Jesuit Mission in Decree 4 of GC32, *"the service of faith and the promotion of justice."* He had no second thoughts about the 'why' and the 'how' of this mandate. If he had to play a role in healing the brokenness of the poor and marginalised of his country, he had to side with them, he had to be their voice against a system which denied them their rights. The Government of El Salvador, which was his 'bete noir', was not pleased with what Grande was saying and doing. They brutally killed him on March 12th 1977.

Archbishop Oscar Romero was a good friend of Rutilio. He was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador just three weeks before Grande was murdered. At Grande's funeral Mass, Romero said in his homily, "The government should not consider a priest who takes a stand for social justice as a politician or a subversive element when he is fulfilling his mission in the politics of the common good." He also said plainly, "Anyone who attacks one of my priests, attacks me. If they killed Rutilio for doing what he did, then I too have to walk the same path." The death of his friend was also a turning point in the life of Romero. From that day onwards, he wholeheartedly worked for the rights of the poor, until his murder by Regime's soldiers on March 24th 1980.

Both Grande and Romero are today symbols of reconciliation but who had the audacity to realise and act that true reconciliation takes place only within the framework of human rights: when the rights of the poor and the marginalised, the vulnerable and the excluded are recognised and realised.

December 10th 1948 will certainly go down as a 'red-letter' day in the annals of world history. It was on that day that the United Nations General Assembly adopted 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (UDHR) perhaps the most definitive and path-breaking document in the world, which centred on the human person: the dignity and rights of every single citizen of the world. At the end of the Second World War (1939-45), world leaders

decided to complement the UN Charter with a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual everywhere. In 1948, the UDHR became both the framework and the direction, which nations believed they had to internalise and mainstream!

The point is whether 'reconciliation' and 'human rights' are compatible with another. For many reconciliation is about 'forgiving and forgetting' – and invariably this is addressed to the victim. Priests and religious often conveniently dish out pious platitudes like “don't worry God understands your suffering; or “he sends you suffering to test you or to purify you” – when people are exploited or denied their basic human rights. No efforts are made to address the perpetrators of heinous acts. Then on the other hand, if some priests and religious engage in working for human rights there are direct and subtle messages sent, “this is not the work of the priests”; “the role of a priest should be in the Church”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights resonate with values enshrined in the Gospel. General Congregation 35 (GC 35, D 3, no. 57) reminds us of the Messianic Proclamation. During his public ministry, Jesus sides with the poor and ostracised of society. He speaks up for the rights of women. He has no qualms in condemning the high and the mighty for placing heavy burdens on their less fortunate brothers and sisters.

We all strive for a more just, equitable and peaceful society therefore our work in India over the years, has focussed on ensuring the rights of the poor and the vulnerable, of women and children, of the displaced and the excluded, of the dalits (those regarded as 'out-castes' or 'lower castes') and the adivasis (tribals); of the minorities and the marginalised. Our efforts have been in three inter-related dimensions:

- to highlight a situation in which the rights of any of the above-mentioned groups are violated
- to make every effort to remedy that injustice – through dialogue, through pressure tactics and finally as an ultimate to use the law and order mechanism (police, judiciary etc.)
- to work towards healing and reconciliation, a process we believe must take place throughout. (Accepting the truth: the fact of a reality which is non-negotiable, however painful, is an important first step towards this).

It has certainly not been easy. I would like to situate our work for human rights in India in a reality, which has gripped us for more than fifteen years now. The State of Gujarat is in North-west India and is best known for Mahatma Gandhi, who gave to the world the twin doctrine of Ahimsa (Non-violence) and Satyagraha (The force of Truth).

The Gujarat Carnage of 2002 can easily rate as one of the bloodiest chapters in post-independent India. The burning of the S-6 compartment of the Sabarmati Express (from Faizabad to Ahmedabad) some distance away from the Godhra railway station on February 27th 2002 (resulting in the deaths of 59 innocent people) was strongly condemned. Several persons have already been convicted for this act, though there is still a raging debate on what caused the fire. The sad fact is that any death, particularly the tragic ones, is bound to leave a great void in the lives and the hearts of the loved ones whom they have left behind.

What followed this, was however, a carnage beyond comprehension and very unjustifiable. Apparently (and this from eye witness accounts), the then Chief Minister of the State convened a meeting of some high level BJP and Government functionaries very late evening of February 27th. What transpired at this meeting has two different versions – but the actions that resulted were blatantly obvious: Muslims all over Gujarat were brutalized, raped,

dispossessed of their lands and houses and murdered. The intensity of violence for days on can be easily categorized as a crime against humanity. Thousands were affected all over Gujarat! Numbers, pale into insignificance, when one recollects the brutality of what took place. For weeks and then months, rampaging mobs indulged in some of the most despicable acts. Besides, the law and order mechanism had not merely abdicated its responsibility but were also seen actively involved in this carnage.

On November 21st 2002, the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal (which some of us had initiated) consisting of several eminent citizens and headed by Justice V. Krishna Iyer (a former Judge of the Supreme Court of India), made public a report entitled '**Crime Against Humanity**', on the Gujarat Carnage. This report was written based on more than 2000 oral and written testimonies, both individuals and collective, from victim-survivors and from independent Human Rights Groups, Women's Groups, NGOs, academics and others. The Tribunal, in its findings and recommendations, clearly indicted the Government of Gujarat and held them responsible for the unfettered violence; murder, arson and looting that took place in Gujarat that year.

The findings of the Citizens' Tribunal also corroborate with the findings of several other groups; these include:

what took place in Gujarat was not merely communal violence or riots; it was a genocide, a carnage, an ethnic cleansing, designed to wipe out or at least to marginalise a minority community.

it was well planned and well executed. It was not a "spontaneous reaction" as some people make it out to be. The preparations must have taken several months. A meticulous census was conducted on the Muslims and Christians of Gujarat in 1999. The data helped marauding mobs know exactly whom to attack and where.

the middle-class (including several well-to-do and educated women) were blatantly involved in the violence; there were very few people who were willing to come out and take a stand to prevent what was happening.

it was clearly a State-sponsored genocide. The Citizens' Tribunal has indicted in addition to the then Chief Minister and politicians, several high-ranking bureaucrats and police officials. The Sangh Parivar (a Hindu extremist conglomeration) was given a free hand to do what they wanted. The police were apparently given clear instructions not to take any action. There is also evidence to show that some were encouraged to join in the violence - which they did, with ruthless finesse. State Ministers and leaders of 'the Parivar' were seen leading the mobs. (a couple of them even were in the Police Control room at the time of the violence).

Over the years, our efforts have been geared towards ensuring justice for the victim-survivors. Our ultimate wish is for healing, reconciliation and peace; this however, has to be within the framework of justice. Meaningful reconciliation cannot take place if there is no acknowledgement, leave alone remorse, from those responsible for the carnage. Sadly, some of those who were responsible for what happened in 2002 now occupy the highest positions of power and privilege in the country. They are cloaked with immunity and with an aura of invincibility. Most of the victim-survivors want to get on with their lives; to begin a new chapter. The loss of a loved one can never be forgotten. There is no desire for revenge or retribution; however, no reconciliation can take place in a vacuum. This is what Rutilio and Romero believed in, realised and championed until the very end.

The human rights approach, apart from others, emphasises three conditions: the truth, its acceptance by all and restorative justice. A reality which violates the rights of others can neither be ignored nor sidestepped, because it is either inconvenient or may have repercussions. The big challenge for us has been to mainstream human rights and at the same time to be bridges between the perpetrators and the victims. In some cases, where the violations are caused by another group of people who are on a similar social plane than the rapprochement, the reconciliation is faster. When the system is held accountable, when the Government (which is meant to protect the rights of its citizens) is responsible for the crimes, that reconciliation, if it ever happens, will take much longer time.

Pope Francis provides us with a cue in 'Evangelii Gaudium' when he bluntly says, "Peace in society cannot be understood as pacification or the mere absence of violence resulting from the domination of one part of society over others. Nor does true peace act as a pretext for justifying a social structure, which silences or appeases the poor, so that the more affluent can placidly support their lifestyle, which others have to make do as they can. Demands involving the distribution of wealth, concern for the poor and human rights cannot be suppressed under the guise of creating a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority. The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised." (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 218)

In the final analysis, we are convinced that, however slow, the human rights approach is a sure way to lasting and meaningful reconciliation. Until then, like Grande and Romero, we need to continue raising our prophetic voices!

Original English



Reconciliation in the Present Political Order

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'When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.' (Matthew 5: 23-24)

Reconciliation is amongst the most demanding challenges presented by Jesus to his disciples. Authentic worship is said to require not only the formidable prerequisite of our willingness to right wrongs we have: it requires *others'* willingness to be reconciled with us, a factor which we cannot control.

Jesus imagines this process amongst 'brothers and sisters', at the level of close personal relationships. A process of *political* reconciliation presents still more intractable ethical and spiritual problems. Can those with political responsibility justly dare to commit **their people** to a process that requires radical conversion?

Yet we Jesuits proclaim that this mission of reconciliation is somehow applicable to global politics and to the bloodiest human situations. We believe that the mission is neither absurd nor arrogant, since we share in the primary mission of Christ, doing the work of his Father. We believe that gifts of the Spirit can be given communally, beyond as well as within the Church, so that the Church may witness from its own spiritual realism to the true, even the unacknowledged, needs of others.

Scripturally, the 'world' to be reconciled includes every aspect of natural and social life opposed to the action of God's Spirit. It is consistent that GC 35 applies the call to reconciliation comprehensively, even cosmically: 'reconciliation with God, with one another and with creation':

In a world form by violence, strife and division, we are then called to be with others to become instruments of God, who 'in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses'. This reconciliation calls us to build a new world of right relationships, a new Jubilee reaching across all divisions so that God might restore his justice for all'. (GC 35, D. 3, n. 16).

As to 'the present political order', wherever injustices fester in the hearts of victims till vengeance finally becomes possible, conflicts can at best be temporarily stanchied, only to break out later. Nothing less than reconciliation can 'resolve' or 'heal' such injustices.

Reconciliation and Political Justice

Even if, however, reconciliation is an essential spiritual mission, pragmatic politicians are likely to regard it as an expression of naïvety, illusion or escapism. They are right at least in their awareness that the more elevated the spiritual language the more susceptible it is to counterfeit. In the Passion narrative of *Luke* Jesus is shunted from Pilate to Herod and from Herod back to Pilate, at the mercy of each. 'And though Herod and Pilate had been enemies before, they were *reconciled* the same day (23: 12, *New Jerusalem* translation). Luke uses words with care, and this 'reconciliation' (or its travesty) spells death for their victim. In his final TV interview the distinguished playwright Dennis Potter observed of such elevated and over-spiritualised language that 'The trouble with words is that you never know whose mouths they have been in!' The USA activist Saul Alinski (in whose community organising movement the young Barack Obama honed his negotiating skills, and who has inspired the 'Citizens' movement that is now has a healthy influence in church circles) was said to hate the word 'reconciliation'. To him it meant that 'the rich keep the money and the poor get reconciled to it'. What then does such a commitment require politically?

First, the search for reconciliation always requires discernment so that it does not ideologically disguise the denial of justice. Some years ago I heard a Jesuit from Chad, Antoine Berilingar, describe his experience of dialogue with both government and oil corporations, in a situation of great poverty. The industrialists typically but dubiously claimed to promote the well-being of the local population. Even if sometimes exploitative, its withdrawal would threaten crucial export earnings. In this situation, Berilingar described a necessary rhythm between *cooperation* (a commitment to dialogue) and *confrontation* – always attempting *clarification*, even where certain interests might be served by obscuring things. The advocates would try 'never break the bridge', preserving at least the possibility of reconciliation. Berilingar was keenly aware that any agreement between the powerful forces of government and international corporations that *damaged* those excluded from the dialogue would be a mockery and betrayal of reconciliation.

Second, working for political reconciliation requires a refusal to project all blame for injustice on the political or business class: and that restraint, in turn requires a form of communal conversion from the central biblical sins of blindness and hardness of heart.

Take, for example, the age-old and endemic belief that distinctive human characteristics derive from race. In a society such as that of Britain, however, with an imperial past that still evokes an almost passionate nostalgia (as the Brexit debacle demonstrated), this belief easily modulates into the assumption of one's own race's superiority over others. Challenging the individual and institutional expressions of this prejudice, requires *us*, as well as our politicians, to grow in painful awareness of these deep-rooted patterns of thought and practice, both individual and cultural.

Reconciliation and Peacemaking

I referred above to the special and poignant problem of bloody conflict. Faced with brutal military and political violence, no one can presume to advocate immediate reconciliation. That move comes, as it were, after the peace treaty. Governments indeed often proclaim the need for reconciliation in far-distant conflicts: virtually never, though, about conflicts in which they are directly involved.

Thus, in the current war in Syria, many devote themselves selflessly to the rescue of victims, and the maintenance of even minimal social and health services. It movingly exemplifies the

power of faith that JRS's services in Syria are operated by Muslims alongside Christians. We, in turn, need faith that such heroism will bear fruit in *eventual* reconciliation.

Or one might practice non-violence, individually, or communally within a specific movement such as the Catholic Worker Movement or Society of Friends. The Church itself may well insist on recognised rights such as conscientious objection. But a direct call to peace will inevitably be re-interpreted by a warring government as the 'peace' that *follows* what is essential, namely victory. Meanwhile it remains true that urgent tasks of mitigating the brutality of the conflict (refusing to accept the torture of prisoners, or the deliberate targeting of civilians) already challenges starkly the prevailing ethos of war.

Seeking reconciliation is, though, a condition preventing other forms of conflict from escalating into war. In his book *Non-Violent Communication* Marshall Rosenberg shows how certain styles of language and communication inflame rather than reconcile, sooner or later provoking rejection that can issue in physical violence. Rosenberg cites the all-too-easy assumption in personal relations, that those who differ from us constitute the problem.

'If my partner wants more affection than I'm giving her, she is 'needy and dependent'. If I want more affection than she is giving me, then she is 'aloof and insensitive'. If my colleague is more concerned about details than I am, he is 'picky and compulsive'. On the other hand, if I am more concerned about details than he is, he is 'sloppy and disorganised'.

Expressing our values and needs in this form, argues Rosenberg, increases defensiveness and resistance among the very people whose behaviour offends us.

A second danger is that of objectification, at the cultural as well as the individual level. Fr Adolfo Nicolás has explained [in an interview](#) his experience of language styles in Asia as compared with Western Europe:

European languages are basically centred on the topic under consideration. They assert or deny, explain or dismiss, clarify or develop an idea, an opinion, a conviction. East Asian languages leave much more space for attention to the persons in dialogue. You do not answer primarily to the topic in question, but to the person asking, and there are plenty of additions at the end of a statement that make this statement softer, fallible or a matter open to discussion and to other opinions... This evidently helps to keep everybody on board without feeling ignored, denied or dismissed from the conversation.

These mechanisms - of defining the other as the problem and of depersonalisation - also function politically.

Consider the 2016 UK debate on the 'Brexit' referendum. Election campaigns, and referenda, are notorious for crude argument. That does not reduce their significance, since they embody the symbolic heart of the democratic process and largely define political success and failure.

The 'Vote Leave' campaign consistently argued that Britain had been systematically exploited by the EU, as if membership had been a 40-year disaster. Its 'statistics' claimed that 'we send the EU almost £20 billion per year'. In other words the EU 'costs' the UK over £350 million per week. The campaign never mentioned the sums or other benefits *received* from the EU.

The official Government pamphlet arguing *for* the UK's continued membership, began, 'The UK has secured a *special status* in a reformed EU' [emphasis in original], summing up its negotiation aspirations in five points:

- we will not join the Euro;
- we will keep our own border controls;
- the UK will not be part of further European political integration;
- there will be tough new restrictions on access to our welfare system for new EU migrants;
- we have a commitment to reduce EU red tape.

Not one of these points conveys even a hint of enthusiasm for the EU or esteem for its members. The UK's membership (with ample safeguards) is represented merely as being preferable to exclusion. The language is frequently dismissive: the demeaning phrase 'red tape', for example may refer to vital regulations on environmental protection, safety or labour rights.

Since the tone of the *media* debate was still more vitriolic, it is not surprising that subsequent negotiations about the terms of 'Brexit' have been tinged with acrimony on both sides, sending an ominous signal for the future.

These remarks challenge the Church too. We cannot publically demand courtesy and respect in political debate while, when, on issues such as sexual ethics and gender, ecclesiastical positions (or the movements that claim to embody them) readily depict opponents as immoral or malevolent. Such a communications style, even characterised as 'principled', abandons the crucial insights of Rosenberg and of Fr Nicolás. Sometimes church bodies, like governments, can call for peace in all conflicts, except their own.

Conclusion

Much of my argument has discussed communication as a means to reconciliation. In other words, reconciliation must be rooted in truth and the search for truth.

The perennial political movements of conservatism, liberalism and socialism all embody a complex mix of truth and falsehood, in which illuminating and necessary values are falsified by absolute and exclusive claims. Parties succeed not by 'truth' but through a rhythm of reaction and counter-reaction to their opponents and predecessors, who likewise express some – and different – truths while obscuring others. In this spirit, the philosopher Thomas Nagel begins his book *The View from Nowhere* with the striking sentence which, I suggest, contains an awareness crucial to reconciliation:

This book is about a single problem: how to combine the perspective of a single person inside the world with an objective view of that same world, the person and his viewpoint included.³

To respect opponents is also to respect (discerningly!) their perceptions and opinions.

Here too, the proclaiming reconciliation requires *reflexive* awareness. The Gospel of John cites Jesus as promising that the Holy Spirit 'will teach you all things' (14.26). In the current Roman Missal, an invocation of the Penitential Rite renders this saying, misleadingly and dangerously as 'You *have* led your people into all truth'. Truth is no one's possession. It is, and always remains, transcendent, not least in its relationship to ecclesiastical proclamation. We

³ Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, p.3

search for both truth and reconciliation: but they are ultimately a divine gift which, as we hope and pray, will crown our own endeavours.

Original English



Reconciliation, peace and political conflict

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Introduction

Be “the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15). It is with this strong exhortation that the 36th General Congregation urges the children of Ignatius of Loyola to commit themselves to the mission of reconciliation and justice¹. For the Society of Jesus in Africa, this reconfirms the commitment made by the entire African Church. In fact, the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops which took place from the 4th - 25th of October 2009 in Rome was themed: “Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace”². Pope Benedict XVI, upon convoking it, hoped this Synod would be in keeping with its predecessor in 1994³. The universal Society of Jesus’ resumption of this theme should motivate the Society in Africa to discern and confirm its apostolic choices in the service of this specific church.

From “Ecclesia in Africa” to “Africae Munus”

In 1994, the First Assembly of Bishops for Africa took place, entitled: “The Church in Africa and her evangelizing mission towards the Year 2000: Ecclesia in Africa”. They assessed the continent, pertinently noting that the resurgence of political conflict was a major challenge for evangelisation. Moreover, it was dashing the post-independence aspirations for a better future.

“How could one fail to take into account the anguished history of a land where many nations are still in the grip of famine, war, racial and tribal tensions, political instability and the violation of human rights? This is all a challenge to evangelization”⁴

The Synod of 1994 would otherwise remark “in Africa as elsewhere in the world the spirit of dialogue, peace and reconciliation is far from dwelling in the hearts of everyone. Wars, conflicts and racist and xenophobic attitudes still play too large a role in the world of human relations. The Church in Africa is aware it has to become for all a place of authentic reconciliation”⁵

¹ GC 36, Decree 1: Companions in a mission of reconciliation and justice, Rome 2017

² Benedict XVI, The Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace, Africae Munus (AM), Nov. 2011

³ John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa* (EA), 1994.

⁴ John Paul II, EA, n. 51

⁵ John Paul II, EA, n. 79

Confronted with this situation, the Synod proposed dialogue as one of the means of action to respond to the multiple social and political conflicts. "Openness to dialogue is the Christian's attitude inside the community as well as with other believers" (E.A. n. 65). It would task the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) with providing the African Church with structures to carry this out: "SECAM is to establish structures and means which will ensure the exercise of this dialogue" (E.A n 65)

Throughout the period between the Synods of 1994 and 2009, the continent would experience atrocious political conflicts.⁶

This situation would cause the Synod Fathers during the Second Synod for Africa to broaden the definition of the African Church's role in a continent criss-crossed with violent armed conflicts: "it was not sufficient to make statements and measure the dramas in Africa; there was need to propose solutions and remedies, pastoral orientations and options able to enliven and animate the entire life of the Church and people of Africa."⁷

"Africae Munus", the encyclical entirely dedicated to reconciliation, would be one of the responses to the crisis. It identified structures within the African church that could serve to promote reconciliation, justice and peace and suggested apostolic areas to do so.

"The body politic, whose essential duty is the implementation and administration of a just order, can be a major instrument at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace"⁸

Later, the Pope would place the responsibility on every Episcopal conference to offer some concrete interventions and commit the Church to investing in the political sphere. "I also encourage you to have an active and courageous presence in the areas of political life, culture, the arts, the media and various associations. Do not be hesitant or ashamed about this presence, but be proud of it and conscious of the valuable contribution it can offer to the common good!"⁹

The Church's credibility for the mission of Reconciliation

This is not the first time the African Church has been summoned to the terrain of political reconciliation¹⁰. One of the most important moments of this commitment was the passage from the last days of dictatorial and single-party regimes to a democratic transition¹¹. During this period, five countries (Benin, Gabon, Congo, Togo, Zaire) among the eight (Benin, Gabon, Congo, Mali, Niger, Togo, Zaire, Chad) that organized national conferences chose a Bishop to preside over these transitional bodies. At the heart of this mission was both the political reconciliation of a people wounded by years of autocratic regimes, and the dream of a democratic transition.

⁶ Among these are the Rwandan Genocide which cost the lives of over 800,000 people, followed by the war in Congo where over 6 million people lost their lives between the years of 1996 and 2003

⁷ Cardinal Monsegwo, Report on Ecclesia in Africa during the second general congregation (Monday 5th October 2009)

⁸ Benedict XVI, *The Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace*, n. 81

⁹ Benedict XVI, *The Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace*, n. 131

¹⁰ Metena Nteba, *Les conférences nationales et la figure politique de l'évêque-président*, in Zaire Africa, July - August 1993, and Paul Gifford, *The Christian churches and the democratization of Africa*, edit. J Brill, 1995.

¹¹ For more on this topic read Eboussi Boulaga, *Les conférences nationales Africaines. Une Affaire à suivre*, Paris, 1993, and Metena Nteba, *Les conférences nationales et la figure politique de l'évêque-président*, in Zaire Africa, July - August 1993.

One of the reasons for relying on this quintessential Church figure was that the public believed the Church could guarantee an inclusive consultation between political and social forces. This would be needed to build a national consensus, draw up transitional democratic structures and engage the wounded communities in a true process of reconciliation.

Thus, at the end of the dictatorships, the public in Africa entrusted the Church with the mission of defusing the crisis, negotiating peace, and reconciling hearts broken by decades of dictatorship. Furthermore, although the transgressions by the single-party regimes were severe, in the name of national reconciliation the public would opt for a dialogue of truth, forgiveness and reconciliation over judicial processes and convictions. The public had faith in the Church to fulfill the criteria of this work; namely, neutrality (not to support the interests of any one party involved in the conflict), apoliticism (no desire for political office) and the service to the common good (ensure that what the powers put in place thereafter would give hope to the poor, marginalized, weak and excluded in society).

If the public turned to the Church for help it is also principally due to its past work, in various places, where it opted for the weakest and most marginalized people. It was this credibility that made the mission of reconciliation possible. Later, regrettably, the mission would be interrupted before its completion. The long-awaited democracy was not consolidated and the efforts of the Bishop Presidents – unsupported as they were by the Church hierarchies – ended up causing divisions in the Episcopates.

Today, a quarter of a century after these experiences, the Synod Fathers again mobilize the Church for the mission of reconciliation in a context of troubling political conflict. In order to avoid past failures, the African Church would benefit from evaluating past experiences of reconciliation.

Peace, justice and reconciliation when faced with war crimes and crimes against humanity

When we examine the question of Reconciliation in the context of political conflicts and particularly armed conflicts in Africa, the relationship between justice, reconciliation and peace cannot be understated.

Indeed, due to the severity of the atrocities and the high number of victims on the continent it would be hard to envisage a hasty reconciliation. It will necessarily be built through a frank and honest balance between justice, reparation and forgiveness. A reconciliation that ignores the victims' fate would guarantee impunity and pave the way for future conflict.¹²

Over the last years, the question of impunity in Africa has gathered momentum, as the crimes under consideration are often imprescriptible. Furthermore, the horrendous violations of human rights were largely committed by the institutions of the state which fear neither justice, nor vengeance, nor reprisal due to their power.

¹² Read: United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council, *The rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post conflict societies*, 2004, and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Rule of Law Tools for Post-Conflict States*, United Nations, New York and Geneva, 2006.

In this context, the struggle against impunity is fundamental to the process of reconciliation *“Justice and reconciliation are antidotes to impunity, the condition where powerful individuals and institutions act as they desire without fear of reprisals, reproach, retribution, or recrimination.”*¹³

Nonetheless, in Africa this battle against impunity has its limits, above all when the State is incapable of establishing a judicial system that is simultaneously effective, just and equitable. When, as we have often seen, the justice of the victor is imposed, those populations who find themselves on the losing side are obliged to choose between “surrender” in often humiliating conditions, or “seeking refuge elsewhere”. This situation means that today, in certain African regions, conflicts are cyclical. Everyone is waiting for their moment to inflict on the other what they have been made to suffer. Whole generations wait patiently for the moment of vengeance.

This experience today in Africa demonstrates that the war against impunity can only be won through the establishment of democracy and rule of law.¹⁴

Dialogue and Forgiveness

In this context, the local spirit and African traditions have been drawn on to provide two other strategies of intervention; namely, Dialogue beneath the “palaver tree”, and community truth-forgiveness-reconciliation (“atonement ceremony”). These customs are considered outside the confines of positive law, and they come to the rescue when legal routes have been exhausted and are not in a position to consolidate peace and reconciliation. This is particularly the case when the blame for a tragedy or violence is impossible to attribute to one side alone.

International law

When local legal mechanisms are weak or partisan and thus incapable of fighting against impunity, the new norms of international justice come into play. This founded on the legal principle of Responsibility to Protect and the jurisdiction of the Rome Statute applied by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Today, Africa represents the largest group of State signatories to the ICC’s Rome Statute¹⁵. Three out of four cases at The Hague Court today are from Africa. Nevertheless the perception of the ICC’s role as regards the promotion of peace, justice and reconciliation is heavily criticized on the continent.

*“Yet these principles and instruments have also occasioned dissent in Africa stemming from the perception of threats to sovereignty, the intrusiveness of international legality on weak states, and the fear of the selective application and implementation of these principles.”*¹⁶

¹³ International Peace Institute, *Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation in Africa Opportunities and Challenges in the Fight Against Impunity*, 2013

¹⁴ International Peace Institute, *Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation in Africa Opportunities and Challenges in the Fight Against Impunity*, 2013

¹⁵ www.icc-cpi.int.

¹⁶ International Peace Institute, *Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation in Africa Opportunities and Challenges in the Fight Against Impunity*, 2013, p. 2

“Companions in a mission of reconciliation and justice”. What does this mean for the Society of Jesus in Africa?

The urgency and necessity for reconciliation of the hearts and minds in Africa after this quarter-century of conflict can be measured by the number of refugees¹⁷ on the continent who remain hesitant to return to their homes, many years after the end of the war.

The 35th GC identified reconciliation with God, reconciliation with others, and reconciliation with creation as the three dimensions of the Jesuit ministry of Reconciliation¹⁸. Inspired by Pope Francis’ teachings, the 36th GC goes further still, unifying the approach:

“... we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental”¹⁹. Moreover the decree specifies: “The letter of Father General Adolfo Nicolás on reconciliation and the teaching of Pope Francis have given this vision greater depth, placing faith, justice, and solidarity with the poor and the excluded as central elements of the mission of reconciliation”²⁰

Today, more than ever, our commitment to reconciliation on the continent passes through a collective effort. The community is called to rise to the challenges of a blatant lack of political leadership on the continent; improve governance in the service of the poor, marginalized and vulnerable; defend and promote rights; and guide negotiations between hostile groups. It means, as Decree 1 from 36th GC so aptly says, supporting a new dynamism on a fragmented continent. As the 36th GC specifies, there is but one crisis: *“These are not separate crises but one crisis that is a symptom of something much deeper: the flawed way societies and economies are organized. The current economic system with its predatory orientation discards natural resources as well as people. For this reason, Pope Francis insists that the only adequate solution must be a radical one. The direction of development must be altered if it is to be sustainable.”²¹*

So, the African Jesuits stand before open terrain. Therefore, today’s commitment to political reconciliation should be a meeting point for the entire Jesuit apostolate in Africa, just as Decree 3 from the 32nd GC was for the entire Jesuit apostolate. Although we carry out our commitment through our activities with the Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO)²² in this field, crossover is inevitable.

Conclusion

Having the courage to dare the audacity of the improbable²³, is a phrase well suited to describe the mission of peace, human rights, dialogue, forgiveness, reparation and reconciliation which awaits the work of the Jesuits in Africa, in the aftermath of the 36th General Congregation. It is neither optional nor isolated to any one apostolic sector as it brings

¹⁷ 18 million: 26% of the refugees in the world (www.unhcr.org/fr/afrique).

¹⁸ GC 35, Decree 3, n. 19-36

¹⁹ GC 36, Decree 1, n. 2

²⁰ GC 36, Decree 1, n. 3

²¹ GC 36, Decree 1, n. 29

²² We supported the work of CENCO to reconcile the majority of those in power and in opposition. In the end the government was not satisfied with the result. Unfortunately, they attacked the Bishops and manipulated groups to attack and destroy certain churches.

²³ GC 36, Decree 1, n. 40

us back to our Jesuit roots²⁴, to the heart of our Jesuit vocation. It requires a return to our “way of proceeding”²⁵ : an experience of discernment, supported by studies, in dialogue amongst ourselves and with other particular churches, in personal, community and Eucharistic prayer.

*Original French
Translation Nils Sunderman*

²⁴ Witnesses of Friendship and Reconciliation. A message and a prayer for Jesuits living in zones of war and conflict

²⁵ Read paragraph 2 of Father Arturo Sosa’s, sj, letter from January 6th 2017.



Reconciliation and migration: A process that sets us in motion

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Migration is an essential element in the lives of peoples' and a principal constituent of human history. Our Christian tradition is testament to this. Stories of human movement can be found from the very outset. From the calling Abraham received in Exodus in Egypt, to the people of Israel crossing the desert in Exile, from the Holy Family's journey to Egypt, to the missionary activities of the Church; the identity of the God's People is intrinsically linked to stories of displaced people and communities, of pilgrimage and hospitality and, without a doubt, of processes of reconciliation. Within our Ignatian tradition, reconciliation is among our key foundational pillars.

Can we talk of a "reconciliation *a la ignaciana*"?

Ignatius of Loyola: reconciled and reconciler

Ignatius of Loyola – a man who pioneered a style of "uniting what is divided" – is an icon of reconciliation and served as a reference point for his first companions, leaving a deep mark in the foundational documents of the Society of Jesus and its subsequent mission. The experience of reconciliation draws on his own deep, personal experience of reconciliation with himself and his past, with God and with all of creation. The illumination of the Cardoner¹ symbolizes a milestone in Ignatius' process of reconciliation, marking the beginning of his life in a new dimension, where he experiences a new way of seeing and relating to creatures and creation, from God's perspective. This reconciliation is a gift from God, but requires mediation and mediators. The "mediator" experience defined Ignatius' life.

Formula of the Institute of the First Company

The term reconciliation has deep historical roots in the founding of the Society of Jesus. In the *Formula of the Institute*, "reconcile the estranged"² appears as one of the essential elements of the Society of Jesus' *raison d'être*.

¹ "on occasions where his opinion was sought on important questions or the methods of the institute of the Society, or when he had to make a decision, he would follow that grace and that light" Nadal, *Dialogi pro Societate*, FN II, 240.

² Formula of the year 1550 – approved and confirmed by Pope Julius III, Apostolic Letters, *Exposcit debitum*, July 21st 1550.

In the *Epistolae Mixtae*, which record in a fresh and direct manner the early Society's way of life, many materials can be found on reconciling the estranged. The privileged space for the Jesuits is prayer and confession where they become mediators when faced with situations of conflict or animosity³. Furthermore, it is interesting to see how Jesuits reconcile and make peace in diverse geographical contexts, while travelling the world. This integrality occurs in varied life contexts and social strata, between nobility and peasants, in cities and villages, and in monasteries between monks, among others⁴.

General Congregations

Decree 4 of GC 32 spoke of this process of reconciliation as a mutual penetration between faith and justice, putting the emphasis on the structural level. "Every process of reconciliation has to pass through the transformation of socio-economic structures. Without institutional change, true reconciliation cannot be achieved. Authentic reconciliation is not the total sum of concrete acts of reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. Rather, it requires more profound changes, affecting society's very roots."⁵

GC 34, for its part, affirmed that such a transformation of socio-economic structures could not take place unless accompanied by cultural and religious transformations. Alongside this, it spoke of the need for our own interior conversion, for a process of reconciliation at a personal level.

GC 35 introduced a key element in the process of reconciliation: the relational level. Since we are all social animals, any personal initiative has social and public implications. This relational level has a threefold orientation, toward God, other people, and creation.

Finally, GC 36 ventures deeper into the intuition of the previous Congregation, endorsing it and situating it within an integral understanding of our mission and not solely within a functional framework. GC 36 develops on the tripartite scheme from GC 35 and reminds us that reconciliation is a work of God: "We are invited to cooperate in this divine initiative; and our means of connection is through prayerful discernment. The reconciliation that God brings is a new reality of justice, peace and integrity of creation."⁶ It particularly stresses closeness to the poor as one of the essential elements if reconciliation is to reach the Lord's favoured people, and recognizes hospitality⁷ towards migrants, refugees and internally displaced people as one of the axes which invigorate our processes of reconciliation in current times (GC 36, D. 1, n. 26).

Migration Reconciliation: Objective or process?

Migration as a space of reconciliation provides both a beacon of hope and fertile ground for a reconciliation which is not a fantasy but a reality. This reality engages our commitment for justice, but resides in God's love. Thus, reconciliation in the world of migration is both an objective and a process which goes on developing in the day-to-day.

³ Coupeau, C. (2007). "Reconciliación", in the Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana (DEI)

⁴ MHSJ, I, 268

⁵ Ares, A. (2009) "Just Relations and Reconciliation", *Promotio Iustitiae*, 2009/03.

⁶ García, J.I. (2017). "Reconciliación y justicia en la Congregación General 36". *Manresa*. Vol 89: 41-51.

⁷ Hospitality has been one of the pillars which, in recent years, has invigorated our work with migrants, refugees and internally displaced people, both at an institutional and community level. Clear examples are the [communities of hospitality](#), which act as safe spaces to accompany processes of reconciliation. Another interesting campaign is [Hospitalidad.es](#).

What do we understand as reconciliation in our tradition?

*“reconciliation meant an attempt to live again, with one’s own wounds and fragility; reconciliation meant an attempt to face one’s own fear, asking for and accepting the help of others, including those who destroyed our homes and assassinated our loved ones. Reconciliation meant a process and a pathway toward openness. Reconciliation meant learning to love others anew. Reconciliation meant returning to our parish where thousands of people were massacred, entering into the same Church, and putting oneself in the presence of a God for whom nothing is impossible.”*⁸

Reconciliation is a theological concept that expresses God’s way of being, which “reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5, 18-19). It is, then, a mission that tries to reestablish just relationships with God, with others and with creation (GC 35, D. 3, n. 12). Reconciliation is “fulfilled in the Kingdom of justice, peace and the integrity of creation” (GC 36, D. 1, n. 3), at the centre of which is “the Cross of Christ and our sharing in it” (GC 36, D. 1, n. 21). Reconciliation is the passion for building bridges and mediating between society’s disruptive tensions. Within this sphere, borders are particularly important, as places where the conditions for a just society have been fractured and people’s dignity has been compromised. Nowadays, migration is a privileged frontier within our ministry of reconciliation. Within these fractures of a broken world, borders invite us to be conscious of our vulnerability and fragility, both on a personal and a community level. Observing these borders and the whole sphere of migration, GC 36 “recognizes the necessity of promoting the international articulation of our service to migrants and refugees” (GC 36, D. 1, n. 26).

Steps of the process: Leaving home, the journey and integration

There are a variety of reasons why a person *leaves their home*. A high percentage of migrants find themselves forced to leave their homes due to external pressure, violence or conflict. This might be of a personal, social, economic or ecological nature. In some cases, the factors producing these displacements are related to war or widespread violence. For these reasons, migrants experience traumatic situations, ranging from mild experiences of “cultural shock”, to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The *journey*, for people who migrate either voluntarily or involuntarily, is usually an authentic ordeal due to the complexity and bureaucracy involved in the legal processes. For those who are forced to leave their homes due to situations of conflict and mortal danger, the situation is even more complicated⁹. Not to mention the fact that human-trafficking cartels control large areas along migration routes, leaving the most vulnerable groups at the mercy of sex-traffickers, organ-traffickers, etc.

Consequently, this phase inflicts serious psychological traumas on migrants, along with severe physical hardship. They remain with the victim after their migration process is complete; sometimes in nightmares or recurring memories which can produce PTSD.

⁸ Personal testimony of Benjamin Nsengiyuma, sj, who experienced first-hand the Rwandan Genocide and a long process of reconciliation.

⁹ This is the ordeal of the many people who cross deserts, who drown in the Mediterranean, who find themselves forced to scale the border fences to reach Ceuta or Melilla, who cross Mexico on top of “*la bestia*” (“the beast”; a train which crosses Mexico to the United States), or in Vietnamese boats raided by pirates in the South China Sea, among others.

*"We arrived exhausted to the desert, although everything seemed to be going well. We were confident in the route the 'coyote' (smuggler) was taking. But suddenly, the 'Migra' (migration police) came and we had to run. Luckily, I managed to escape with the coyote. We were lost in the desert for a number of days. It was horrible there. He raped me a number of times, threatening to kill me or leave me lost in the desert if I did not let him have his way. In the end we reached Houston. There isn't a single week that I don't wake up crying with nightmares from this. I haven't told anyone until now. Only my sister. I never wanted my mother to suffer from it."*¹⁰

The arrival in the host country is seldom easy for migrants. In general, it is rare to find a reception or hospitality process that is sensitive to the migration process and the specific needs of each person or family. In fact, in some cases there are serious violations of human rights, discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

Moreover, usually there is a failure to recognise the "portfolio" which the migrants carry with them: academic qualifications, work experience, etc. Thus, they are relegated to being considered nothing more than simple manual labour. This erodes their very self esteem, severely wearing them down, and becomes yet another element which migrants must overcome in their host country.

Elements of the process of reconciliation from a Christian perspective

Schreiter¹¹ outlines five elements that any process of reconciliation with migrants from a Christian perspective must consider.

First and foremost, God is the fountain of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a work of God and we are invited to be ministers and mediators of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). This element is usually present in migrant communities' experience of faith.

Second, healing begins with the victim. In processes of migration reconciliation, sometimes the person who causes harm is not present throughout the process. Divine action permits certain healing for a victim even when the perpetrator doesn't change or isn't present, although there cannot be a deep healing if the perpetrator isn't part of the process in an active manner.

Third, the process of reconciliation converts the victim and the perpetrator into new people. Occasionally, one might imagine that the result of the process of reconciliation could return the victim and the victimizer to their initial state, but it's fair to say this "idyllic" situation does not exist. Victims and perpetrators undergo changes in new relational spaces, so the process of reconciliation transports both to a new state or place. God carries them to a new state where the past is neither denied nor forgotten; rather, it is set into a new framework which converts the victim and victimizer into a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Fourth, the migration story needs to be reformulated. The experience of suffering in any of the three phases of the migration process must be put in a framework of interpretation and understanding. This reformulation doesn't mean forgetting; rather it means creating a context

¹⁰ The experience of a young Salvadorian woman in her journey to USA. En Ares, A (2017). *La rueda migratoria: tejiendo historias y experiencias de integración*, UPComillas, Madrid: 92.

¹¹ Schreiter, R. (2008). "Migrants and the Ministry of Reconciliation", in Groody, D. G., and Campese, G. (eds.). *A promised land, a perilous journey: theological perspectives on migration*. University of Notre Dame Press: 107-123.

where justice and forgiveness help recover the dignity of the victim and define forgiveness for the perpetrator.

Finally, the healing process of reconciliation never finishes. There are certain traumas which escape the process of reconciliation, surfacing at unexpected moments, eluding even the work of mediation or the processes of forgiveness and the reestablishment of just relations. In a way, we return to the beginning, to God. What appears impossible for human beings, is possible for God, as the fountain of reconciliation (Luke 18:27).

Agents of Reconciliation

When we think about the process of reconciliation from a Christian perspective it's important to bear in mind the different agents involved in the process. There are at least seven agents that can be identified in the process of reconciliation: God, the migrant, their family, the migrant community, the host or receiving community, the mediators or agents of reconciliation and the local ecclesiastic communities.

As was previously made clear, God is the principal agent and fountain of reconciliation. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that one of the main focuses of this ministry must account for the migrant, within their experience of integration. Closely linked to the migrant's experience is their family, in particular their children. The process of integration involves a measure of adaptation and occasionally trauma. In many cases, this is passed down and experienced intensely by descendents, whether they lived through the process of migration as young children or were born in the host country.

Neither the migrant, nor their family lives in isolation. For this reason, it is important to take the entire migrant community into account, above all in cases where the cultural and ethnic links are very strong. Likewise, it is essential in any process of reconciliation to consider the host community. It is beneficial if they are aware of the circumstances and context of the processes of migration, and the positive repercussions of building a common and inclusive social future. Every process of reconciliation is experienced within another broader process of integration with a bidirectional and intercultural dimension, distinct from mere assimilationism and more radical multiculturalism.

Other key elements are the agents or mediators of reconciliation. In many cases, these people find themselves between two worlds. On one side are the feelings of discrimination and prejudices of the host community towards migrants. On the other are the lack of understanding of what the migrants experience and the lack of tools to comprehend the transferences and counter-transferences that the very experience of interacting with migrants gives rise to. Accordingly, educating the agents of reconciliation is crucial, because they will likely end up facing their own personal traumas as a result of accompanying the traumas of others.

The ecclesiastic communities in the local area are also important points of reference in the process of reconciliation. In many cases, the process of reconciliation is experienced within the ecclesiastic community, which acts as mediator and provides a safe space for encounter.

What are the three key dimensions in the process of migration reconciliation?

"Promoting just relations and reconciling the estranged require repentance, conversion and reparation from those who have caused harm. They also require that victims' memories be cleansed of violence and oppression."

Drawing on the above description, we can identify three dimensions which will account for the process of migration reconciliation from a Christian perspective. First of all is the *clarification of the truth*, which begins with recognizing the trauma and accessing the memories. Basically, this will involve answering the question: what happened? In this revealing of the truth there are two essential elements: forgiveness and justice. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting or impunity. Forgiveness has to do with remembering, but in another way, in a different form; a way of remembering which can free us from the vicious circle of resentment, helping us to become true agents of change.

Another fundamental element in the process of reconciliation is justice. Justice and forgiveness have a complementary relationship so long as forgiveness is not confused with forgetting and justice is not reduced strictly to the legal sphere. Uncovering the truth is the authentic link between justice and true forgiveness; not just because bringing the truth to light is an important expression of justice, but because it contributes to the victims' very process of healing. A true process of reconciliation is achieved once the offenders receive forgiveness and the victims offer it. If this reciprocal movement is broken, then pain, untruth and injustice are perpetuated. But, if repentance opens us up to being converted, uncovering the truth and repairing the damage caused, we will be following the path that leads to healing the victims suffering and attaining an authentic forgiveness.

Second of all comes *the reprocessing or the encounter* of a new memory narrative. In many cases this can be painful. Sometimes, even accessing these memories is difficult due to the trauma which the very memories have caused the migrants. Children who have been subject to traumatic processes are particularly sensitive to this. The process is further complicated if the memories have taken on a "life of their own", controlling the victims, instead of the victims controlling their own memories¹².

For this reason, it's very important to create safe spaces and pathways for the victims, where they can reformulate and reprocess their memories. Our identity is made up of life stories, and for this identity to continue developing through this process of reconciliation, these memories need to be "detoxified" to the point where the narrative and the tangle of relationships can be woven into the victim's broader life, and if possible into that of the perpetrator too.

Finally, *the migrant's agency is recovered*. Once the truth has been uncovered, accompanied with the process of forgiveness and justice, a healing of the memories can happen within a new narrative. This is the moment where we can start to see some results. One of the most important is that the migrant recovers their ability to take up the reins of their life¹³. As we said before, the process of reconciliation converts the victim and the perpetrator into new people. God transports both to a new state where the past is neither denied, nor forgotten, but set into a new framework which converts the victim and the victimizer into a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Here, they can rediscover the dignity of being sons and daughters of God.

As Christians, we recognise ourselves as one universal community, created in the image and likeness of God; a kinship that opens us to fraternity and bestows us with one dignity. Thus, our identity is rooted in our following of Jesus, in his life as a pilgrim, as a wanderer. This

¹² Schreiter, R. (2008): 119

¹³ From the perspective of social participation, the migrant sees their rights restored onto equal terms and they are enabled to participate in the public arena, invigorating processes of reconciliation and adding to the construction of social cohesion and a new inclusive citizenry.

pursuit drives us towards encounter and dialogue, towards the desire to uproot ourselves, to go out into the world so that we may discover our home there.

The experience of reconciliation invites us to set ourselves in motion and share life with other people who live in transit. Being with them opens us to the possibility of feeling closer to a God who became a migrant, to know him more and in a more profound way. Reconciliation unearths us as sons and daughters of a pilgrim whose home is the world.

*Original Spanish
Translation Nils Sunderman*



Reconciliation: A Dialogic Praxis of a Kenotic Church

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Introduction

This article begins with an anecdotic experience from Laos. The second section calls for a dialogic process for a Church that is disposed to be reconciled with the reputable shamanic personages (wo/men elders, healers, exorcists, sages and shamans) of the indigenous communities. This reverential dialogue enables the local Churches to be more attuned to the reconciliatory movement of God's Spirit in the world and creation and thus respond to the cries of the poor and the cosmos.

An Anecdotic Experience

Sr. Guan Chai shared an anecdote related to her ancestral wisdom of the Lao Lum community in Laos.¹ The point of her anecdote is about reconciliation between the humans and rice, a produce that her people cherished and grateful to Mother Earth for her fecundity.

Grandma told me that a group of people went to the forest to get some forest produce. They wrapped some cooked rice with the banana leaves for five to six members in the group. At lunch, they ate and threw the remaining rice where they sat and ate, without performing any ritual. Actually before lunch, the ritual enjoins everyone in the group to take 3 grains of rice and offered the spirit of the forest to eat. Another group passed by and heard the cry. They approached the spot where the cry came from and they saw the strewn cooked rice with the banana leaf. They realized the cry is from the cooked rice. They knelt and asked for pardon from the rice. They performed a ritual and recited some prayers. They pleaded with the rice, "Please go back home with us." They took up the banana leaf and rested it on their head and returned to their village.

In the indigenous perspective, reconciliation involves responding to the need for the discerning (re) appropriation of the thrown-away ancestral wisdom that fosters and nurtures a truly indigenous Church and a world reeling from the effects of ecological crises. This reconciliation is a kenotic and reverential process that involves everyday interaction, accompaniment, religious experience and liberative struggle.

¹ The anecdote was retold by the director of RTRC, Fr. Niphot Thienwihan, on Feb 22, 2017, at EAPI. Fr. Niphot heard the story from Sr. Guan Chai who was at RTRC for a short training course at the Research and Training Centre for Religio-Cultural communities (RTRC).

A Church in Dialogue

The human and ecological reconciliation presumes a discerning and kenotic Church that is affectively disposed to a dialogue for reconciliation between the Church (modern religions and dominant cultures too) with the reputable shamanic personages of the indigenous communities.

Dialogue of everyday interaction

The process of reconciliation calls for a reverential relationship with the reputable shamanic personages as coeval dialogue partners of equal dignity and depth of mystical experience. Reconciliation takes place when we commit ourselves as Church to eliminate any discriminatory and unequal (time and space) relation that suggests a power-differential between a civilized urbanite and an illiterate primitive. In this reciprocal relationship, deep reverence is a non-negotiable moral relational value that facilitates reconciliation that builds up a mutual relationship of trust and entrusting of local knowledge. Only the practice of dialogic reverence ensures a respect for the differences of the indigenous religio-cultural beliefs and practices without having to denigrate their dignity and so decimate the shamans' otherness.

The shamanic personages show great reverence for mother earth, based on the indigenous logic that the indwelling divine Creator, ancestral and nature spirits have made the earth spirited and therefore sacred. The impact of profit-driven development and economics on the ecological wellbeing of planet earth is not without its consequences, albeit unforeseen, especially in terms of a rupture of the harmonious relationship between the earth and humankind that resulted in the lamentable destruction and untimely death in the aftermath of the innumerable natural disasters. In this uncalled-for suffering, humankind is confronted with the naked truth about the ultimate meaning of existence on earth. May this "questioning" and "doubting" brings about the necessary conversion that liberates many ecclesial hearts from that "dialogic irreverence" that desecrates God's creation based on a sacrilegious and exploitative relationship with the earth.²

The reconciliatory dialogue of everyday interaction with the shamanic personages enables the local Churches to learn of the value of dialogic reverence towards the earth. The relational value of dialogic reverence grounds its basis in the covenant God entered with humankind through Noah (Gen 9:12-17). Under the aegis of this covenant, humankind is exhorted to live in harmony with God's creation which entails a dialogic relationship in which the embodiment and manifestation of dialogic reverence to all of God's creation - "every living thing that is found on the earth" (Gen. 9:17) is of paramount importance for the sustaining the wellbeing of environmental ecology.

Dialogue of accompaniment

This reconciliatory dialogue invites and challenges us to value the accompaniment of these shamanic personages who believe that accompaniment is "from within": first, living in the midst of the village communities and second, guiding the communities through ritual

² In fact, O' Murchu suggests that "it is not about life on earth, but about the life that is earth" and this life "is affected, for weal and for woe, by the quality of our respect for its inherent processes and our willingness to interact (relate to) all life forms in a gentle, nonexploitative, cooperative manner." See Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Quantum Theology: Spiritual Implications of the New Physics* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004) 110, 38.

celebrations so that they have an inner mystical experience of the sacred power of the divine being. As Moses steps onto the sacred ground of God's divine presence, symbolized by the burning bush (Ex 3:2-6), the shamanic personages themselves, through communal prayers, chants and dance, enter into the sacred presence of God. In Altered State of Conscience (ASC) or trance, these shamanic personages enter into an intimate and mystical experience of God who descend and mission them to act on God's behalf as salvific intermediaries. Like Moses who guided the indigenous tribes of Israel across the wilderness, red sea and desert to the promised land, acting as their intermediaries for manna and quail (Ex 16:1-36) and water (Ex 17:1-7), and further revelation from God (Ex 24:18; 33:1-35) on the relationship of Israel with Yahweh, so too the shamanic personages who accompany the indigenous communities constantly seek God in ritual celebrations and act on God's counsels for the good of their communities. Their religious experience in ritual celebrations resonates with Jesus' ASC experiences of the theophanic-Abba at his baptism, transfiguration, and at the hour of his anguish before his arrest (Jn 12:28-30; Lk 22:43-44). Only such recurrent intimate mystical experiences of God empower the shamanic personages to guide the indigenous communities out of all forms of addiction, evil desires and especially greed which St. Paul equates with idolatry (Col 3:5) and stay faithful to God. Fidelity to God entails the perpetual renunciation of these idols (Ex 20:2, Col 3:5) so that the poor at the margin will be delivered from the burden of poverty, offered new life to the lifeless, justice for the oppressed, and joy of a sustainable livelihood with dignity and reverence.

The accompaniment enables the Church to affirm the revelatory and salvific significance of the religio-cultural traditions in the economy of God's plan of salvation (LG 16; *Redemptoris hominis*, 6; Cf. GS 22). On the one hand, the empowering accompaniment of the Church ensures the "full flourishing" of these shamanic traditions.³ On the other hand, the Church is in a position to resolve the many dilemmas which the shamans face with regard to the religio-cultural practices of their shamanic rituals.

Dialogue of religious experience

The nature of this reconciliatory, kenotic and reverential dialogue enjoins the Church to savor the SACRED by taking a plunge into the ritual celebrations. This dialogue of religious experience enables the Church to understand the importance of entering into the mystical experience of the shamanic personages in order to appreciate the richness therein and thus disposed to receive the revelation of the God who is at work in their rites. In the address, Chief Harry Lafond, at the 1997 Synod of Bishops for America, requested the Church to grant "a sacramental value to some of our rituals, which are rituals of healing and reconciliation that can be lived as an expression of our faith in Christ the Saviour."⁴

With these shamanic personages, this dialogue of religious experience is not always discursive and therefore academic, but rather conversational and experiential. Upon the invitation of the

³ The Lahu regarded Jean-Pierre Oxibar (1898-1964), a Betharram priest, as a prophet, a liberator and protector of the Lahu who "rejoiced in such indigenous traditions as being those of a people who, like his own Basques, could become Christians but still express their joy of life through the ways of their ancestors. Moreover, it was Oxibar's hope, Saint-Guily writes, that "these ancestral traditions would flower still more gracefully" under the protection of the new religion and "through his presence and his prayers." More detail, see Anthony R. Walker, *Merit and Millennium: Routine and Crisis in the Ritual Lives of the Lahu People* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Cooperation, 2003), 621.

⁴ See "An untraditional involvement, *Interview with Achiel PEELMAN, OMI*", <http://www.omiworld.org/en/content/omi-interviews/753/achiel-peelman-omi/>, accessed November 12, 2014.

shamanic personages, there will be opportunities to attend and participate in the ritual celebrations presided by them, be it joining in the chants as observers or communal dancing as participants, in order to experience spirit-possession by the God-who-descends as *Ruah Elohim* who infused ALL (*cosmos and anthoropos*) with the power of the spirit and sustains ALL with the power of the spirit. Such spirit-possession enables the Church to gain an inner experience of the mystical experience of the shamans. This inner experience complements what is observed on the outside. It is important for the Church to have both the observational experience from the outside and participatory experience from the inside to attain the desired complementarity of human and mystical experience.

This dialogue of religious experience will enable the Church to appreciate the inscrutable omnipresence of the Pentecostal Spirit. This Spirit has shattered a mono-ecclesial Jewish community and poured forth into the Greco-Roman milieu. This universalization of the Creative Spirit, alluded to in the multi-glossarial phenomenon of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-13) is a multi-religio-cultural manifestation and presence is well attested by the upright shamanic personages and the Church involved in this dialogue of religious experience.

The multi-religio-cultural manifestation paves the way for the Church to enter into a gradual and fuller understanding of the alternative ways by which these shamanic personages and the indigenous communities express their religious experiences and how they articulate their understanding of God, their experience of being possessed by the Spirit or spirit-possession, and the liberative-salvific mission of this God. This articulation is more of a conversational sharing, either on a one-on-one basis or in a small group that involves recognition and clarification of what each dialogue partner is saying and even additional personal sharing. What appears to be a personal sharing is indeed an ongoing verbalized reflection on the richness their mystical experiences of the shamanic ritual celebrations

In this dialogical process, the Church is able to perceive, intuit and understand how God's Spirit is revealing from within the mystical experiences⁵ of the shamanic personages and appropriate the verbalization of their shamanic *spirit-uality* – the uniqueness of their God (*Theo*) who descends in Spirit, invisible to the human eyes but “experien-ciable” in their human heart as a divine touch and mystical spark, like being overshadowed by the Creative Spirit (*Pneuma*) and hence spirit-possessed, and how this God (*Soter*) is saving their people in the life-struggles as marginal communities. In fact, what the Church witnesses in the shamans' communal prayers, chants and dances is the living local indigenous *theo*-logy, *pneuma*-tology and *soter*-iology arising from within the communities of believers and shamans of the primal religions. The “arising” and “blossoming” of a local indigenous *theo*-logy, *pneuma*-tology and *soter*-iology point to a God who is a divine Spirit. This Creator-Spirit breezes where God (Jn 3:8) who is *Ruach Elohim* (Jn 4:24) will, operating “in” and “out of” the ecclesiastical structures, never totally monopolized or domesticated, always empowering, liberating and saving God's marginal peoples. As intermediaries of God in the dialogue, this reconciliation disposes the Church to affirm, supplement what is needed to enrich their verbalized understanding, liberate them from any undue shadows of unethical influences. Finally, as co-pilgrims, the Church is enjoined to “lift up” (as opposed to suppress and denigrate; cf Jn. 8:28; 12:32; cf. Nb 21:8) the local indigenous theologies, communicate them in languages intelligible to the outside world so as to create ripples that will challenge and enrich the local, regional and global Church and society.⁶

⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Council: *Ad Gentes* no. 9; *Lumen Gentium*, no.17

⁶ See Jojo M. Fung, SJ, *A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability* (Manila: Jesuit Communications Foundation INC, 2014); "What Christians Can Learn from Shamanic Pneumatology," in *Interfaith*

Dialogue of liberative struggle

Enkindled by the indigenous *theo*-logy, *pneuma*-tology and *soter*-iology, motivated by an indigenous *spirit*-uality, the dialogue partners are poised for actions with other stakeholders in the local Churches, the other faiths, and the civil society. It is a communal struggle for land to ensure a sustainable livelihood with greater security and dignity in their villages. It is a struggle that invokes the Divine in a communal interfaith prayer service for the recreation of sacred space and the collective rite of “sacralizing” the forests, the sources of water for irrigational purposes, the rice grains before planting, the fields for planting... etc. in their ancestral homeland. It is a struggle against the encroachment of the developers and the annexation by the hegemonic nation-state. Finally, it is a struggle for the reconciliation of the humankind with the biodiversity and innumerable species of the earth community and the ultimate sustainability of God’s creation.

As dialogue partners, the indigenous communities and their shamanic personages enjoin the local Churches to engage in a multileveled liberative struggle. At the socio-cultural level, it is a struggle for the reconciled Church and the modern religio-cultural traditions to exercise greater dialogic reverence for the otherness of the indigenous identity as the cultural and religious Other, without being totally assimilated or annihilated by the dominant Self. At the ecclesial level, it is a liberative struggle for greater democratic space to articulate their indigenous *theo-PNEUMA-SOTER*-logies and their ensuing religio-cultural practices that struggle for the sacred sustainability of the earth community and all life forms therein. Finally, at the local-regional-global structural level, it is the liberative struggle for freedom from the oppressive idolatry of global capitalism that sacrifices the earth’s human and natural resources on the altar of profit-maximization, practical relativism, distorted anthropocentrism, driven by the unbridled greed and insatiable lust for both patriarchal and hierarchical power of domination and violence.

Conclusion

The local Churches have much to gain from a reconciliatory, kenotic and reverential dialogue with the reputable shamanic personages and become a more inculturated Church. These local Churches effect an interspiritual reconciliation that beholds the shamanic personages with coeval reverence, emulate their model of accompaniment, honors their mystical experiences of God, and engage in the liberative struggle of indigenous peoples for greater sacred sustainable of their livelihood in their ancestral homeland.

Original English

Dialogue: Global Perspectives (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 119-128; *A Shamanic Pneumatology in a Mystical Age of Sacred Sustainability* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) and *Creation is Spirited & Sacred: An Asian Indigenous Mysticism of Sacred Sustainability* (Manila: Claretian Publications, Jesuit Communications Foundation INC and Institute of Spirituality in Asia, 2017).



Reconciliation with Creation

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A mission of reconciliation and justice is the basic directive of GC 36 and is integral to our work in responding to ecological concerns and social margins. As Jesuits, we have talked about environmental and social degradation for decades. We have institutes so designated and we have worked for policy change in governments and globally, from the 1992 Rio Earth summit and its progeny. The Society of Jesus increasingly emphasizes an integral call for reconciliation.¹

If our mission is to deepen and take on renewed significance, we need to change our personal and institutional lifestyle as well as our educational and intellectual commitments. There is a need for all of us to learn new habits in relating to the natural world and to adapt personal, institutional, social and economic practices that enhance a just sustainability.

Already much has been written about *Laudato Si'* with extensive reflection on the concepts and teachings including the intellectual development and insights found. The challenge is for us to significantly impact human habit and sustain natural habitat.

Reconciling with Reality

People living close to the natural ecosystems of the world are suffering greatly. They are mostly the poor experiencing increasing socioeconomic inequality, degrading resources, shrinking resource areas and suffering the worst exposure to novel entities² and uncertainties of climate. A significant percentage of these communities is socially fragmented within and lacks the education that should accompany their integrity as persons seeking livelihoods. Many others are urbanized with uncertainty of work, alienated from the land where they or their parents subsisted.

Many of the poor, see and feel the innate connection with life around them, though not the planet's total diversity. They know not only the God of the living³, but in the daily experience seeking out food, the God of how they live as are humbly and hopefully dependent upon God to provide. They don't have answers to their crisis for they do not manage the global pricing schemes of raw materials and broader consumerism, which consume their energies. Many

¹ General Congregation 36 Decree 1 "Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice."

² <https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-04-03/humanity-must-use-innovation-and-ingenuity-live-within-planetary-boundaries-new>

³ Matthew 22:32: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

lose courage and despair. Meanwhile the concepts, arguments and issues overtake people's ability to commit and they are reduced to fate: "anyway, what can I do?" Yet there is much we can do when we have hope.

The contexts of displaced people, migrants and refugees are but the extension of the margins driven by lack of opportunity, anxiety, maximization of profits and war. Every action in the world connects in one complex reality; every force has its impact where much is painfully misaligned. Here we need hope, reconciliation and the celebration of creation.

The predominant circles where Jesuits talk are not those of the poor. We share socio-psychological analysis and soul-searching questions as to why the response is so weak in this growing crisis. We humbly acknowledge our limitations, yet our very institutions may prevent us from taking action, for we have established an efficient daily order and secure lifestyle in a world of consumption; which generally yet grievously buffers us from the poor and the land. We are in many cases unable to impact from the ground.

Reconciliation first requires understanding, reflection and acceptance of present relations with a sense of responsibility. Second, it requires culture and community: a sense of belonging. Third is the human spirit, conversion and wanting desperately to make a difference! It is an aspiration beyond all that is learned and received, something more, wonderfully me-and-Other! This is when decisions can be reached and the integrity of action carries us through. We can call for change through realities like Standing Rock⁴, a local grieving giving witness to a global pain, but the need for sustained collaboration is still illusive in many instances.

Reconciliation is not about feeling good, it is about caring

Often the first walk alone in a natural forest is one of scintillating excitement at its size, climate, light and life. There is also awe in how the beauty of the ordinary reflects the divine. When the excursion is over, the awe may evaporate leaving a sense of momentary loss. We may have promised to do things differently, but then we are busy and commitments fade, failing to reform our daily life.

When living in a world of consumption, the natural world of mountainsides and coastlines connect in special moments of celebration and grief, after which people return to living in highly polluted and polluting cities.

Reconciliation sounds great and is a reasonable aspiration, not being an occasion for conflict but it is not about enjoying creation and ticking off a bucket list, doing a sky dive, or celebrating by a campfire and seeing the stars. Nor is it about sustaining my lifestyle in green terms.

Reconciliation is not simply acknowledging the sins of forest degradation grave as they are, or the "preservation" of forests so city dwellers can be one with nature. Reconciliation with creation is about the meaning and integrity of all life from forests to seas, including the poor farming families and urban dwellers so all are connected and sustained. This is the primary disconnect, not living as one.

⁴ The Youth Group that Launched a Movement at Standing Rock <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/magazine/the-youth-group-that-launched-a-movement-at-standing-rock.html? r=0>

When dealing with daily details, reconciliation quickly becomes a point of frustration and exhaustion, even division as to what or how things need to be done. Why bother segregate when the waste buckets are mixed together again, why bother save water or electricity if there is a mega dam? Oftentimes there is a need for a retake as to “why bother.” To be reconciled takes much giving and even more commitment.

Laudato Si’ says the environment is everything that extends out from us; the environment is relation not object. Experiencing the life of indigenous communities and seeing the silent economic and sometimes social exclusion gives a glimmer of the alienation of people and land by urban society. Migrants seek land to raise their children in ways better than it was for them. They seek to satisfy the needs of their children but are not always able provided from their meagre productivity they then seek the means to leave the land. But what sustainability does the city provide?

In developing countries, the poor still scavenge, pulling out from the heaps of filth “spring water” bottles to recycle, grateful to God that they have food this day. “Our hope is in the Lord who made heaven and earth.”⁵ At what point does indifference become judgement? The poor are not without sin, but what did they do to deserve a lifetime on our city dumpsite? In some countries waste local regulations achieve some segregation, here a review of consumption may help many reduce novelty buying and increase the buying of local produce. For the less fortunate urban youth, lifelessness and drugs are shocking realities very hard to escape. For others more fortunate, having money may breed a culture of entitlement, yet many are insecure in their jobs and lose the sense of belonging and purpose. How do we form communities of practice that are inclusive and give hope?

Seeds of care and hope are planted with every experience and germinate with reflection and engagement. The “why” has to be answered from within, quietly and simply: “I care.” Maybe some things can’t yet be recycled, I may not have the right methods, but I care. Why do I care? Care aspires for something better. It comes though sharing with others what is deep in the heart; then there is a kindness, a joy, in simply acting.

Seeking to do good with the youth

In seeking to do good we must go deeper with others especially the youth. They need to examine what is happening to them in life so their emotions, thoughts, actions and dreams are integral.

Life is not all struggles; it is deeply important they find consolation. In reflecting they may feel a better person because they care rather than because they are successful. Consolation, conversion and integrity are felt during these times and their lives open to God. Jesuits call this “examen,” a daily spiritual exercise starting with gratitude for what is. Some youth find this helpful to stay steady, experience hope and be ready to make clearer decisions when the time comes. Hope is experienced as freedom to act.

Developing “basic characteristics and attitudes: availability, mobility, humility, freedom, the ability to accompany others, patience, and a willingness to listen respectfully so that we may speak the truth to each other”⁶ helps the youth work better together.

Seldom do the youth have occasion for sharing what affects them deeply. Such occasions are

⁵ Psalm 124: 8

⁶ GC36, D.1, n. 11.

the basis for training youth in leadership of service. Discerning together the direction of an activity helps the youth draw closer to reality without being submerged by uncertainty. In discerning the path to take their relationship with God can be more deeply personalized.⁷

Living in my reality

The challenges of *Laudato Si'* helps people shift habits and gain new energy as ecological citizens. Schools seek to lengthen commitment with habit change through activities like "water for all" and "the carbon challenge." There is much goodwill we can work with in going beyond standard ecological practices and generating greater commitment to transform life relations.

We may be hit several times by reality before changing. Massive flooding or forest fires can make a world of a difference to our view of reality. Coming face to face with a refugee family or simply a child's question of: "Why do you buy bottled water and throw away the bottle if you know it is bad for the environment," can shift our path indefinitely.

Today we are challenged to live reality in a diverse world, and not choose a reality of convenience. We are challenged to collaborate in reducing environmental degradation and socio-economic exclusion. This challenge deepens when we sense a personal loss on seeing degradation and our needs diminish. We need to challenge blind economic development often tied into fossil fuel exhaustion and the business of war. After a flood disaster, local economies boom but it does not mean the problem is solved. While bloody war rages somewhere, an economy is blooming somewhere else. The general lifestyle of consumption without reference to impact wreaks havoc.

We may seek to read the Gospel in context so as not to ritualize and simulate a response to the suffering of the poor and creation. Amongst the thousands that gather and millions now in need, is this the context where we reflect and seek to feed them? Reading the Gospel in an isolated place, do we know the Creator provides and how do we carry that care in mission? We need to go beyond just trying, we need to celebrate failure by learning the lessons of our efforts and give ourselves totally for we do not possess hope we receive hope.

Reconciliation with creation is again within the mainstream culture of the Church. The Church's challenge is to change by going beyond herself into the world with a message of joy and justice. We need to witness like the first Christians to the integrity of our actions, by practicing what we preach. The "new evangelization" needs to be experienced as the joy of the gospel, giving praise and seeking reconciliation.⁸

Planning and collaboration for reconciliation

We are in the Anthropocene, the present geological era when humans are mining geological deposits and laying down a new atmospheric chemistry and biodiversity record for the planet. More than any other time, society makes choices affecting the world. But society cannot make all the choices it wants as some rule out the choices of others. What are the clear priorities that we can together set and live for?

⁷ GC36, D.1 n. 23.

⁸ Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, no. 14.

If we are courageous we can choose to engage with renewed strategy. Given “the magnitude and interconnectedness of the challenges we face, it is important to support and encourage the growing collaboration among Jesuits and Jesuit apostolates through networks”⁹ as we are called to give “priority to actions which generate new processes in society.”¹⁰

We need strategies and mechanisms for joining broader society in seeking a better quality of life, for all may contribute to the promotion of human dignity, social justice and care for creation in our rapidly changing world. Social, pastoral and intellectual programs need to build capacity and collaboration to be more effective given the scale and interconnectivity of the challenge. There is much great learning needed at the margins where indigenous communities and small farmers suffer the effects of change and need greater accompaniment and advocacy. The hope shared by a community participating in human development programs is fundamental to achieving the outcome. International institutions are beginning to see that the success of many programs is due to the faith commitment of a community.

The Global Ignatian Advocacy Network (GIAN)-Ecology of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat seeks to ensure that the integral ecology agenda is included in the strategic planning of Conferences, for implementation in the Provinces. To pursue this work, initially 15 areas of activity have been identified at three levels: at the global where cooperation is promoted, at the regional where actions are accompanied, and at the local where initiatives are supported.

During the Stockholm Dialogue on sustainability science and values that GIAN-Ecology organized, it was recognized that “(s)cience and technology do not impact without personal, political, and economic commitment. The focus on values helps form a broader social engagement that is gravely lacking in guiding social actions and political decisions necessary to stay within the planetary boundaries. Science can more actively support societal transformations by engaging elements of society in their concerns. Researchers can document approaches that work well and lessons that may be transferable to other problems and locations. This gives a practical common ground for better understanding the need to integrate sustainability science and values. The effort is to promote a collaborative engagement and understanding among those doing environmental science and those working with local communities for sustained initiatives on resource management, transformative education and simpler lifestyle.”¹¹

How do we live together with care knowing how the land and sea provide for us and how God is still working through all? How can we work with the youth in their diversity contributing to their hope and sustainability?

We seek a path as Jesuits to be with people in the Church and beyond; those you and I meet in daily living, on the city street or mountain path. We seek reconciliation in context with people and creation needing always to go deeper.

Many Jesuits and partners are asking about the margins and how better to engage. What realistic horizon do we envision for an integral ecology and how do we enable the Church to move? What would be the needs to make that horizon possible?

⁹ GC36, D.1, n. 35.

¹⁰ GC36, D.1, n. 37.

¹¹ Walpole, Pedro, SJ, “Features of a Sustainability Science” in *La Civiltà Cattolica* English edition, March 2017, Vol 1, No 2



Reconciliation and Religious Communalism

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General Congregation Thirty-five (GC 35) states that the 'new context' of our mission is marked by profound changes and acute conflicts; also by 'new possibilities'.¹ GC 36 points to the many needs and challenges and specifically talks about the "images in our minds of people humiliated, struck by violence, excluded from society, and on the margins." It says that "Hope itself seems threatened and is replaced by fear and anger."²

In fact, the above is true of South Asia, which has over decades seen terrible violence in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. India, the largest and most populous, has deep fault lines in the form of caste and creed, ethnicity and political ideologies, poverty and deprivation, illiteracy and obscurantism, and of course unacceptable inequality. These are threatening to tear asunder the social fabric as prophesied by the architect of India's Constitution Baba Saheb Ambedkar. He pointed out to the irreconcilable differences and the inherent contradictions in Indian society. On paper there is political equality but on the ground this, as well as economic and social equality, are denied.

Religious Communalism

Among the most serious threats, the biggest for India is 'religious communalism', which is fascist in nature as it believes in using religion or any means, including violence, to achieve its objectives. Communalists, in their quest for power convert Hinduism into 'political Hinduism' (Hindutva); Islam becomes 'political Islam' and espouses Jihadi terror; for both ends justify means. 'Communalism' in South Asia conjures up images of mass mobilization and violence, preceded by propaganda and hate speeches against targeted communities. The horrific memories of the Partition of India continue to haunt modern India with no sign of closure for its victims on both sides of the religious divide (Hindus and Muslims). The British left India but the 'divide and rule policy' of the colonial masters was espoused by communalists of all hues.

Post-partition India has witnessed killings and riots after riots³ between communities which have left indelible scars on the psyche of the nation. In almost all of these riots, some of which

¹ GC 35 D 3, No. 8

² GC 36, D 1, No. 1

³ In recent years 1984 saw the massacre of innocent Sikhs; in 1992 there were riots all over the country after the demolition of the Babri Masjid; 1993 saw bomb blasts as reprisal for the demolition of the Masjid; in 1997 there were attacks on Christians in the Dang district of Gujarat; in 1999 there was the sensational killing of Graham Staines, an Australian missionary working Odisha; in December 2007 Christians were again attacked in Khandamal, Odisha; hundreds of Muslims were killed in Gujarat in 2002 allegedly as reprisal for death of Hindu pilgrims in a train burning case; and so on.

were actually 'pogroms', reconciliation and justice have been most elusive. The victims include those killed and those who managed to escape by the skin of their teeth, often leaving behind loved ones who simply could not make it. Women and young girls, including minors, have been raped and later burned in order to destroy evidence. Tens of thousands have been displaced and have become refugees overnight; in their own land. Yet, most of the perpetrators escape the so-called long arm of the law. Conviction rate in riot cases have been abysmally low as the cases against perpetrators are hardly filed and if filed the work is shoddily done. In most cases, victims do not come forward to file and to depose knowing that they will be targeted. Thousands of families continue to languish in make-shift dwellings, at temporary relief centres.⁴ The sense of fear and anger, frustration and despair are palpable.

The phenomenal rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – the right-wing nationalist political party – which only sometimes camouflages its politics of polarization and the majoritarian agenda in the rhetoric of 'development', has resulted in physical, cultural and psychological attacks on Christians and Muslims. The rising tide of intolerance is affecting civil rights and liberties and the space for civil society and people's movements to express dissent. Democracy itself is at stake. The pursuit of political power is so central to the party that it does not shy away from espousing 'ends justifying any or all means' policy. The loss of life and property and harm done to the social fabric are all considered 'collateral damage' that occurs in the pursuit of bigger goals. The record of the opposition parties, chiefly the Congress is not encouraging. They have followed 'appeasement' instead of 'empowerment' politics and have also flirted with communalism when it suited them.

Towards Reconciliation: Existing initiatives and new possibilities

The Gospel of Love, that includes Reconciliation as part of a comprehensive understanding of a Justice based on Faith, invites us to action although it is by no means easy. The image of the Christ on the Cross looms large, not only forewarning the reconcilers of the struggle that lies ahead but also providing the courage and inspiration to explore new possibilities. These actions involve the political, legal and social domains. Both oppressors and the victims need to be invited to the table to dialogue in order to understand what went wrong, the harm caused, the need for reconciliation and compensation for damages, the need to prevent future conflict and platforms for ongoing dialogue.⁵

Communalism, which is fascism in the garb of religion, has not only to be exposed, confronted and halted in its track, but also defeated in order to save the present and future generations from civil war and genocide. The communalists themselves have to be saved from their devices and ideology that will lead to their own destruction.⁶ It will be a long journey, which has to be undertaken, and it is a matter of hope that it has begun in many simple and modest ways. The most difficult challenge is to find out how do we deal with fascists who clearly do

⁴ This writer visited the Dangs district in 1997 as part of a fact-finding group. He also visited Gujarat during the 2002 riots and observed that the law enforcement agencies and the people at large were not sensitive to the suffering of the victims. There was also an absence of remorse for what had happened. People had believed the propaganda against the minorities. The then Prime Minister of the country who visited the Dangs said that there should be a national debate on conversion.

⁵ Across the country, there are Jesuits and other groups working to build communal harmony. The Bombay Jesuits and their collaborators have started 'Samanvaya', which seeks to create a platform for those who wish to contribute to communal amity in whatever way possible.

⁶ What happened in Nazi Germany is a case in point. The German people realized much later that they were misled into supporting the Nazi ideology.

not want reconciliation because that does not suit their short- and long-term goals. This should not be a deterrent. As the GCs tell us, there are indeed many and new possibilities. Jesuits and collaborators have started a counter-narrative based on the values of the secular Constitution of India with an inspiring Preamble that enshrines high values of justice, equality and fraternity.

Awareness programmes are going on in schools and colleges. Students and faculty are made aware of the forces that subvert the Constitution, distort and rewrite history, destroy the scientific temper, emphasize differences rather than commonality, plant seeds of discord in order to harvest votes during elections, seek to divert the attention of the people from the real issues to manufactured ones.

Collaboration, networking and alliance building is happening with secular civil society groups such as the NGOs, specialized research organizations and think tanks to deepen and broaden the alliance needed to combat the spread of fascism, dressed up as nationalism. International coalitions have been able to move governments and institutions around the world to act against national leaders with fascist tendencies.

Intra- and inter-religious dialogue: Communalists may not believe in God or any liberating spirituality, but they are well aware of the tenets of religions and the psychology of the people. They use their knowledge to manipulate people and use religious symbols and metaphors to for power. Not only is there a need to understand other religions better, but there is a need to know one's own religion at a deeper level so as to better find meeting grounds with other religions. This will diminish the scope of communalists to manipulate the people.

Media and the dissemination of information: More work needs to be done in this area by putting out articles and information in the public domain. Minorities and other targeted communities have not been adept in putting out true information about themselves and

have not been able to counter propaganda or lies spread about them in the media. Public opinion is crucial before, during and after the conflict both for reconciliation and justice.

Higher education system: The University has become the new battle ground and is under attack. Liberal ideas and empowerment of the marginalized and critical thinking are anathema to fascist ideologies. Our higher educational institutions should not only be protected from attacks but should be strengthened to pursue their liberating mission. Specialized courses, at the college and university level, must be offered with facilities for deeper research into the causes and consequences of riots, with a view to finding long-term solution.

Church and related institutions: The Church has immense human, material and spiritual resources, which can be deployed. Legal aid and counseling services for the victims of communal violence can be provided in many more church-related institutions such as parishes. Medical aid can also be provided to the victims.

Engaging with the state and its agencies: Dialogue with the state is important in order to not only bring immediate relief and later rehab for the victims but to also pre-empt communal tension and violence. It is important to nurture good relationship with the administration, chiefly with law enforcers such as the police who are out there on the scene and can help or hinder. This has helped in the past, if not to prevent riots but at least to limit damage.

However, if the state and its agencies are complicit in the planning and execution of violence against certain communities, as has been happening, this task becomes quite onerous.

But nonetheless it is important to engage with them so that they know who we are and what we stand for. Inviting state representatives to our institutions and functions results in getting to know each other and are important steps in building up relationships (CBMs - Confidence Building Measures).

Vigilance committees: Setting up of local vigilance committees comprising of members from all sections of society is an important strategy to build trust and confidence in the communities. This helps in the prevention of violence. These committees can become early warning messengers and where violence could not be prevented, they have been helpful in post-conflict situations.⁷

Reconciliation Commission and Public hearings: It is important to set up Reconciliation Commissions with eminent citizens on the panels. The Commission could be entrusted with organizing public hearings wherein the victims testify and the oppressors have the chance to apologize and compensate. This could be the basis for initiating reconciliation or action in the law courts (public interest or social action litigation) or government action and policy.

In conclusion, it must be stated that the existing initiatives are woefully inadequate to tackle the hydra-headed and growing monster of religious communalism. All sections of society must wake up before it is too late. The time to act in meaningful and decisive ways is now!

Original English

⁷ Mohalla (local) Committees were formed after the riots following the demolition of the Babri Masjid with the help of celebrated 'super-cop' Mr Julio Ribeiro, a Christian with a reputation for honesty and courage. These committees have been very effective in containing or pre-empting communal violence.

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