

a matter of spirit

This issue: Reconciliation—Personal & Global

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Jorge Bombel is a retired army general. After 27 years in the military, he headed the modern language department at Whitworth College. He now dedicates himself to Providence hospital board work in Eastern Washington. gkbombel@msn.com

Dialogue Seeks Reconciliation with Iraq

Edited by Suzanne Lynch

a year after the start of the U.S. war in Iraq, IPJC wondered what it would be like for people of different perspectives to engage in dialogue about what is needed to achieve reconciliation. In March 2004, Linda Haydock, SNJM, facilitated a conference call among three individuals: Roberta A. Popara, OP, a Dominican Sister of Sinsinawa; Jorge Bombel, a retired army general; and Nick Mele, a former Foreign Service officer. Following is an edited version of their discussion.

Linda Haydock, SNJM (LH): Why did you said yes to this conversation?

Jorge Bombel (JB): I always welcome a chance to exchange ideas with people. I also feel it's incumbent on all of us retired military to let people know that we too are thinkers and that we too have feelings and that we don't always agree with the orders we receive, though ultimately we have to carry them out. In fact, to be honest, we seldom agree with the wars that are cast upon us.

Nick Mele (NM): I said yes because in everything I do I seek reconciliation, and I am still processing my involvement in a very different case of international reconciliation involving the U.S. and Korea.

Roberta A. Popara, OP (RP): My reason

comes from my own personal involvement with the Dominicans in Iraq. Reconciliation has been something on my mind.

LH: Roberta, would you share a bit about your trip to Iraq?

RP: As the years of sanctions ensued in Iraq, the Dominicans

made a commitment to solidarity with the Iraqi people. In December 2003, Beth Murphy, another Dominican sister, and I went on an extended stay with one community of Dominican sisters

in Iraq. Beth and I have just written a document outlining what we saw.¹ And number one: people were saying they needed security. Under the Saddam regime, they had

a sense of fear, and now that fear was globalized. They didn't know where the next danger would be.

LH: Would each of you share your perspective on our going to war in Iraq?

NM: Instead of sanctions and the prepara-

tions for war, what we could have done was to have supported nonviolent change through the creation of the fundamentals of civil society in Iraq. There was no plan for the occupation, for rebuilding the infrastructure, and restoring security. For a long time now, our leaders have used our military to advance very ill-defined political objectives. Iraq is probably the premier example of that. We now have an occupation that seems increasingly unpopular and a drift toward further violence and perhaps a civil war once the coalition forces leave Iraq.

JB: I definitely think it was an ill-defined war. I don't think the chance that we could effect a meaningful change was worth one American life. But one thing that gives our country stability is that the military doesn't decide which wars it will pursue. Nonetheless, we have to salute and execute our orders. I don't know of any

"We in the military seldom agree with the wars that are cast upon us"
—Jorge Bombel



Iraqi Pieta

Photo by Mariana Wood, OP



Roberta A. Popara, O.P., is a Dominican Sister of Sinsinawa, who does retreat ministry and spiritual direction in North Palm Beach, FL. rpopara@cpro.org

military person—especially after the experience in Vietnam—who underwrote the decision to transmit our power so far for such a protracted period of time in a culture we don't understand.

RP: I don't use the word *war* for what happened in Iraq. My term is *invasion*. I not only felt something was being perpetrated upon the Iraqi people, but also something was being perpetrated upon our own military, especially young military. They were being put into a situation for which they were very unprepared culturally.

NM: We all seem to agree it's a terrible situation. Thinking about the long-term and the work of reconciling the different groups in Iraq with one another and the Islamic world with the West was not done. Now we have the rush to turn over authority to some Iraqi civilians and none of the basic ground work for creating a civil society has been done.

JB: When military becomes involved, it's very late in the decision making process. They never ask, should we? They usually just ask, can we? And what are the percentages of success? They purposely exclude the military from political decision making, and I'm not sure that's always bad if we have good, honest, and ethical civilian leadership. I would find it difficult to believe that anyone with any experience in this kind of military action would have agreed to go into Iraq if they had thought about the consequences after the battle.

LH: What steps need to be taken for healing, justice, and reconciliation in Iraq?

RP: Are we talking about reconciliation among various groups in Iraq? Reconciliation with the regime? Reconciliation for the

Iraqi people? Reconciliation that we Americans need? This reflects the depth of reconciliation that is needed in the conflict. As my own disclaimer, I don't know what the Iraqi people need in terms of reconciliation. I don't know fully what the American people need either. I only have some ideas. And one thing we need is a revitalization of civil society in the United States. We need one big civics classroom for American people. I find myself increasingly questioning our ability to be citizens—not just in a nationalistic sense, but citizens with a broader perspective of a world that's getting smaller and smaller.

JB: I reflect upon the presence of the military in a lot of countries where they're there for a peaceful purpose, and they are well-received. However, once you go in as an invader, the military will have a very difficult, if not impossible job being part of any true reconciliation because the Iraqis will never trust us. But there is a lot of good. There have been a lot of schools built, and a lot of walls painted and a lot of potholes filled, a lot of other things restored. All that sometimes gets lost in the bad things we've

I think WE are part of what needs to get reconciled there.

— Roberta Popara, OP

done in waging that invasion. The sooner we get the military out, the better chance we have to seek any reconciliation.

RP: I think we are part of what needs to get reconciled there.

NM: I come at this, as we all do, from my faith perspective, and for

me, reconciliation has a lot more to do with forgiveness and healing and reaching for wholeness that we may never be able to obtain. The beginning of reconciliation in any context has to be a dialogue wherein each side listens to the other confess—I'm putting it in very Catholic terms—confess its sin, its fault, and then after that confession of sin or admission of fault, each side listens to the other talk about how they each have been hurt.

RP: In any reconciliation—for ourselves as American citizens, for the Iraqi people, or different ethnic groups including the Christian community there, which is really almost a forgotten minority—these are players that we need to be mindful of.

NM: We have to get back to a civic process. People in this country seem convinced of their own powerlessness or perhaps are satisfied that our leaders will make all the decisions for us. In addition, we have to deal with the way we demonize Islam.

RP: I would agree with you. Why is it that we American people can be conned into pejorative thinking about people? Why aren't we curious about others in wanting to know them, their lives, their values, and their goodness?

JB: One of the things that could start the reconciliation process would be that we as Catholics would initiate a highly publicized day or week of prayer aimed at convincing our government that they are going to have to change.

RP: I've been reflecting on the arrogance that allows our government to invade another and then believe we are the ones providing for an independent Iraq. We're not really handing them anything but a lot of ill will.

JB: The confusion of a war sometimes drags lonely soldiers to do stupid things. But it's a conundrum because if you prepare a soldier to put his life on the line in fighting a determined enemy, you can't water down his enthusiasm for potential battle with good will. You try to check that legally through things like the Geneva Convention, so we don't do stupid things like shoot prisoners. For the most part, over the years, the United States has been living up to those things. But there's very little time for much other than maintenance of equipment and combat training. I would say that the officer corps for the most part is intelligent, and the generals who are there now are very conversant with the culture. But it stops there.

NM: I now work for an international civilian unarmed peacekeeping organization. And very consistently, military officers who have been involved in peacekeeping identify the same problem: the primary function of a military organization is to fight. To have them take on other things is essentially to introduce institutional schizophrenia. Wherever they go, the U.S. military has always been very positive, building schools, feeding children, all kinds of things. And yet, this is in conflict with their basic role. There needs to be a *nonmilitary* peacekeeping facility built up and we need to increase cultural awareness. The West, certainly the United States, is very backward when it comes to Islam and to the Middle East. We see things in terms of black and white. The Crusades were, and are

still seen in the Muslim world as invasions. There's a huge cultural gap that we have to overcome.

LH: What can the government or religious groups do?

NM: First, we need a process of examination in this country of where we have gone wrong, where we have sinned. Second, we need some admission of that and an opening of dialogue with the Iraqi people and with the different groups in our own society. Thirdly, based on that dialogue, we need to take concrete, cooperative steps. I can't even envision what they might be because we need to hear the Iraqi piece.

RP: We need to allow people to feel safe to speak their truth and have some

hope that healing can happen.

JB: First, we need a renewed inventory of the ethical nature of our foreign affairs. Secondly, we need a new approach to cultural awareness. We need to train people more in history, culture, civilization, and the languages. Third, we need to turn over the rebuilding of the Iraq to a reconciliation force that is acceptable to the Iraqis.

RP: We need to ensure that our educational institutions teach about human dignity and human rights and promote a curriculum that prepares students for world citizenship. If we continue to live with a provincial mindset, we only continue to perpetrate the kinds of things that have happened in this invasion of Iraq.

LH: What in your own experience of reconciliation influences you?

RP: Jesus said, "I came that you may have life and life to the full." I am a broken person in need of

God's redemption. I believe God has in mind for me, and the whole world, life and life to the full.

NM: The first place I was assigned overseas was South Africa under apartheid. Time and again I saw non-white South Africans respond with forgiveness, patience, understanding, and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit to the most outrageous offenses against their dignity as human beings. And I had the privilege to go back after Nelson Mandela had been elected president, and I saw those same people, many of them who had risen from very humble stations to real power. Their response was not to use power to revenge their grievances, but rather to work for reconciliation. I could relate that to my own experience—within my family, my work, and my international assignments. Jesus said forgive seven times seventy times; that's an expression that means an infinite number. It's our duty, and it's our call to forgive, to reconcile, and to restore wholeness to relationships.

JB: After I had been selected for brigadier general, I received a letter from my boss, and he said, "As you pump on your chest and think about what you have achieved, look around and remember who you are." I was very lucky. And I wonder why a guy like me could have gotten promoted to senior leadership and then want to get away from it all and retire. I think it's because God wants me to talk about reconciliation. I need to talk about the military, our foreign policy, and how, in the most humble ways, we can do things to make the world better.

LH: What is your hope?

NM: I hope for reconciliation, examination, confession and
continued on next page



Nick Mele is a retired Foreign Service officer with over 25 years of experience in Asia and Africa. He coordinates public relations for the Nonviolent Peaceforce Project from his home in Bellingham, WA. n.mele@comcast.net

We have to deal with the way we demonize Islam.
— Nick Mele



Hizkias Assefa is professor of Conflict Studies at Eastern Mennonite University and founder of the African Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Network. This is adapted from his article "The Meaning of Reconciliation." assefah@emu.edu

What is Reconciliation?

Hizkias Assefa

Compared to conflict handling mechanisms such as negotiation, mediation, adjudication, and arbitration, the approach called *reconciliation* is perhaps the least well understood.

The essence of reconciliation is the voluntary initiative of the conflict parties to acknowledge their responsibility and guilt. The interactions between the parties are not only meant to communicate grievances, but also to promote self-reflection about one's own role and behavior in the dynamic of the conflict.

In both reconciliation and other conflict resolution mechanisms, dialogue is expected to generate change and transformation. In reconciliation, however, the forces for change are primarily *internal* and *voluntary*; while in the other approaches they are external and to a certain extent coerced. Unless the need for change is internalized, the change is likely to be only temporary.

Justice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for reconciliation. Reconciliation takes the concern for justice a step further and is preoccupied with how to rebuild a healthier environment between former enemies. ~

ADDRESSING CONFLICT		PARTICIPATION
Process	Solution	
Force	Impose a solution	
Adjudication	Appointed third Party decides & solution is imposed	
Arbitration	Choose a third party & decision may be imposed	
Negotiation	Search for a solution that is satisfactory to all & outcome can depend on the position of power of the parties	
Mediation	Mutually satisfactory solutions assisted by a third party	
Reconciliation	Voluntary acceptance of responsibility & movement toward change & transformation	

Elements of Reconciliation	Sacrament of Reconciliation
Honest acknowledgment of the harm each party has inflicted on the other. Sincere regrets and remorse for the injury done	Contrition
Readiness to apologize for one's role. Readiness of the parties to "let go" of the anger and bitterness caused by the conflict	Confession
Commitment by the offender not to repeat the injury. Sincere effort to redress past grievances	Penance
Entering into a new mutually enriching relationship	Forgiveness & Conversion in Community

continued from page 3
dialogue.

JB: I hope the civilian leadership in the Department of Defense will renew the professional development of the senior officer corps to develop soldier/statesmen who can interact with senior policy makers to develop courses of action that will better meet the

needs of the entire international community.

RP: I hope people will be actively engaged in the world through their faith. I hope they will be involved in the civil society of our country to bring about reconciliation at many levels. We've got to be out in the market place. We have to engage one another in the

civic discourse.²

1 See Roberta A. Popara, O.P. and Beth Murphy, O.P. "Concerns and Analysis: A Report to the Dominican Justice & Preaching Promoters." March 2004 www.domlife.org/topiciraq.html.

2 The full transcript of this dialogue available from IPJC.

Opening the Body, Mind and Spirit to Reconciliation

Linda E. Sewright

What people don't realize is how much religion costs.

They think it is a big electric blanket, when of course it is the cross.

—Flannery O'Connor

Two things I know are stronger than death—love and injustice. Both are necessary in a process of reconciliation—for in order to reconcile, something must be sundered, some injustice will be perceived to have occurred. And in order for forgiveness and reconciliation to happen, love must be present.

Many faith communities adopt a curious practice when it comes to forgiveness and reconciliation. They may speak of wanting to “practice resurrection,” but they forget that there is no resurrection without death.

What does this mean for our personal healing and reconciliation work? It means that in order to heal, to grow in love, we will need to travel the pathway of death. Our culture is not so keen on this concept. We do not have many safe containers for our grief.

One clergy person I know, from a mainstream Christian denomination, models well for me the denial of death and loss.

He sees forgiveness as “giving up the hope of a better past.” All he needs to do is accept that something was sundered and move on—forget it. He has no hope of healing,

fixing what is broken, or reaching out in reconciliation to an injured party—particularly if it is his

actions that caused the sundering.

Not reaching out toward forgiveness and reconciliation affects us on all levels. When we refuse to do the necessary grief work of acknowledging a wrong or a loss, it stays locked in our bodies.

In a very real sense it can lead to cancer, or heart disease, or other serious illness.

In 1993 I had a journey with colon cancer and began a pathway of healing with the labyrinth and through my dreams. In one of my dreams, I asked the question: “What can I do to be healthy today?” I expected to get an answer like “take more vitamin C,” or “walk ten miles a week.” Instead, I awoke with a dream about forgiveness. And it was forgiveness for *myself*.

I dreamt about a relationship with someone I loved in which I was badly hurt and betrayed. My dream was telling me that I needed to forgive myself for having been involved with this person. My healing from cancer depended on my reconciliation

my body and had not known how to heal it. Forgiveness—forgiveness was the answer I got.

I began the very real physical work of healing from this betrayal and many others in my life by walking the labyrinth.

I have been working with the pathway of the labyrinth for over ten

years and know it to be a powerful tool for healing and reconciliation on the personal and spiritual levels. The dynamic of balance

that it engenders in the body is a natural integrative

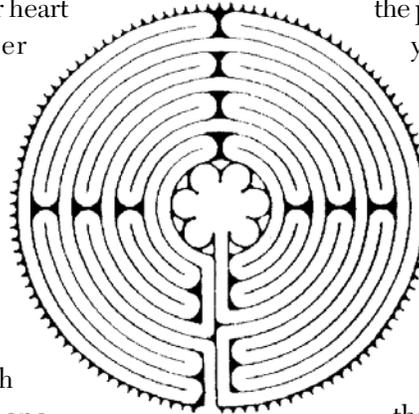
healing tool much like that of centering prayer. The physical movement of walking the path can open the heart, release negativity from the unconscious, and lead toward the holistic body awareness that God is love.

It has been a hard lesson for me to learn that God *is* love—even on the symbolic level of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. But resurrection *only* happens with a death.

Reconciliation *only* needs to happen when something has been sundered. This requires recognition

of wrongs, remorse, and making amends. This can only happen when we are willing again and again to have our hearts broken and to *openly* do our grief work. We need to learn to show our vulnerability. Doing so is a natural

process that allows us to move toward forgiveness and reconciliation. ~



When we refuse to do the necessary grief work of acknowledging a wrong or a loss, it stays locked in our bodies.

and forgiveness for the shame and hurt I continued to carry from this betrayal. I had taken the rift into



Linda Sewright is a spiritual director and leader of the Northwest Labyrinth Project. brigid272@aol.com



Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S., is professor of theology at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. This is an excerpt from *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998)

The Christian Understanding of Reconciliation

Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S.

Context and circumstances have affected how Christians have used the word reconciliation and how they have gone about achieving it. For Protestants, there is an emphasis on reconciliation as the result of Christ's atoning death and the justification by faith. This position has the advantage of seeing reconciliation in continuity with the saving acts of God through history, especially in a theology of covenant. If

there is a classic location for a Protestant theology of reconciliation, it is Romans 5:6-11.

The Catholic emphasis would be slightly different, focusing on the love of God poured out upon us as a result of the reconciliation God has effected in Christ. Here the emphasis is on the new creation. If there is a classic location for this theology, it is 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.

In the description of a Christian understanding of reconciliation that follows, the emphasis favors the Catholic position. Let me summarize what I see as the central points of Paul's teaching on reconciliation in five points.

First of all, *reconciliation is the work of God, who initiates and completes in us reconciliation through Christ*. Ultimately, reconciliation is not a human achievement, but the work of God within us.

Furthermore, God initiates the work of reconciliation in the lives of the victims. Ordinarily we would expect reconciliation to begin with the repentance of the wrongdoers. But experience shows that wrongdoers are rarely willing to acknowledge what they have done or to come forward of their own accord. If reconciliation depended entirely upon the wrongdoers' initiative, there would be next to no reconciliation at all.



God begins with the victim, restoring to the victim the humanity which the wrongdoer has tried to wrest away or to destroy. This restoration of humanity might be considered the very heart of reconciliation. The experience of reconciliation is the experience of grace—the restoration of one's damaged humanity in a life-giving relationship with God. Humans are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). It is that image by which humanity might mirror divinity, by

God initiates the work of reconciliation in the lives of the victims.

which humanity comes to communion with divinity, that is restored. That God would begin with the vic-

tim, and not the evildoer, is consistent with divine activity in history. God takes the side of the poor, the widowed and the orphaned, the oppressed and the imprisoned. It is the ultimate victim, God's son Jesus Christ, that God begins the process that leads to the reconciliation of the whole world in Christ (Col 1:20).

In like manner, God begins the process of human reconciliation with the victim. It is through the victim that the wrongdoer is called to repentance and forgiveness. Seen from this perspective, repentance and forgiveness are not the preconditions for reconciliation, but are rather the consequences of it.

God's action is not some thunderbolt over and apart from human action. The communion between the human and the divine involves divine initiative coming through human action. It is frequently reported that the moment of reconciliation comes upon the victim as a surprise, or the consequences of reconciliation take people where they had not expected to go. There one can discern God's action: moving the victim and the community along in a moment of grace.

Discovering that moment of intersection of the divine and the human leads to the second point in a Christian understanding of reconciliation, namely, *reconciliation is more a spirituality than a strategy*. If reconciliation is principally God's work, then we are but "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor 5:20). It is in God working through us that reconciliation is to be found. Reconciliation means in

the first instance, then, the cultivation of a relationship with God that becomes the medium through which reconciliation can happen.

restoration does not mean taking us back to our former state, the condition in which we were before evil was done. God gives us back

the story of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. Our narratives of suffering, of experience of violence and violation, can find their form and their transformation in the story of what God has done in Christ. The resurrection confirms and manifests God's power over evil, which is why we are able to read the resurrection stories as stories of God's healing and forgiving power in the world.

Reconciliation is not about the erasure of memory; it is about its transformation.

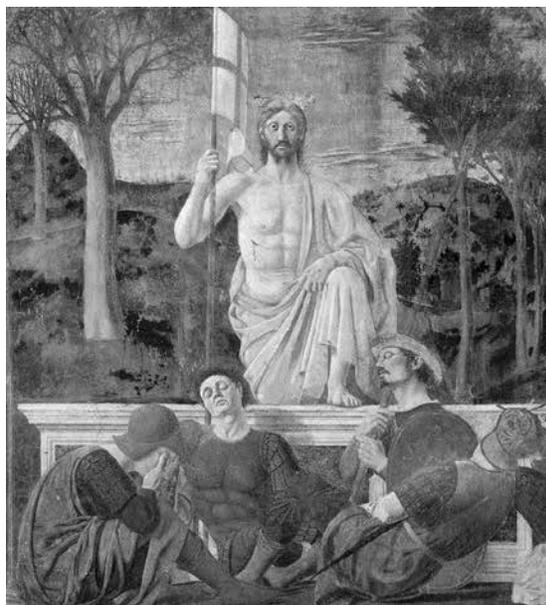
That relationship expresses itself in spiritual practices that create space for truth, for justice, for healing, and for new possibilities.

Reconciliation as a spirituality is absolutely essential. Reconciliation is also, however, about strategies. Creating the conditions under which reconciliation might happen in communities of memory and communities of hope is the first step of any reconciliation strategy.

Recognition of the relation between spirituality and strategy is essential. A concentration on strategy without an equal emphasis on spirituality gives the impression that reconciliation is a technique that can be learned. Reconciliation becomes something that human beings can do in and of themselves. There is, then, a balance between spirituality and strategy. The spirituality that should guide the strategy, even as the strategy gives the spirituality form in action and practice.

Third, *the experience of reconciliation makes of both victim and wrongdoer a new creation* (2 Cor 5:17). The experience of God's reconciling work is such that

the humanity that was wrested from us, but it is a humanity that includes now the experience of reconciliation. It is not a denial or obliteration of the painful experience of injustice and violation; it is a transformation of the experience



Piero della Francesca, Resurrection

that will be forever part of who we are. Reconciliation is not about the erasure of memory; it is about its transformation.

Fourth, *the process of reconciliation that creates the new humanity is to be found in the story of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ*. For Christians, the "master narrative" of divine reconciliation is found in

We look then to the Paschal Mystery—that pathway from suffering to death and then to new life—as the narrative that organizes our chaotic and painful experience of violence into a narrative that will carry us, too, from death to life.

Fifth, *the process of reconciliation will be fulfilled only with the complete consummation of the world by God in Christ*. As we become aware of the complexity that must be untangled in a reconciliation process, and the enormity of the task of doing this, we are humbled before the charge to bring about reconciliation. It becomes ever more evident that reconciliation is God's work, with our cooperation.

The final state of reconciliation, that new creation, is not the inexorable unfolding of a preconceived scheme. It involves human agency, and the coming together of a myriad of contingent events. Reconciliation can only be grasped as involving "all things, whether on earth or in the heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). ~



Suzanne Lynch is editor of *A Matter of Spirit*.
slynch@ipjc.org

Finding the Christ, the Center

Suzanne Lynch

i pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.

—John 17: 20-21

On the night before he died, breaking bread with his disciples for the last time, Jesus prayed that his followers might be one. Yet almost from the very beginning, the adherents of Christ fell into factions, and the scandal of our division continues. The Catholic community remains separated not only from other Christian churches; it remains deeply divided within itself. Embattled every bit as much as the nonreligious sector by modern cultural wars, we are increasingly polarized by issues of age, gender, vocation, language, liturgy, and political outlook. The theological divisions of Vatican II have not been resolved. Conservatives vilify liberals. Liberals demonize conservatives. We each clamor for attention for our cause: war, hunger, poverty, sexual abuse, abortion, capital punishment, bio-engineering, environment, marriage, homosexuality, celibacy, the role of the laity, and the role

called the *Via Media*, trod a minefield of tension, alienation, and discord. I am one of those middle-of-the-roaders. I love our traditional prayer and music, breathed with new life of the vernacular, yet I find the masculine language of our liturgy imaginatively and spiritually limiting. I am proud of the vast body of Catholic social teaching, with its expansive view of human rights and its preferential option for the poor. But I'm disheartened when I find our commitment to justice isn't broad enough to include the possibility of women priests, and I'm discouraged by the ongoing arrogance



Duccio, *The Last Supper*

and abuse of power by so many members of the Church hierarchy. I am proud of our commitment to the weak, the elderly, the homeless, the hungry, the sick, the immigrant, the imprisoned, and the unborn; yet, for me, a source of continual disillusionment is the inability of Catholics on the left and on the right to open their arms equally wide to the needs of all humanity.

Catholics rarely talk to each other about these worrisome rifts. Yes. Conservatives talk to conservatives. Liberals talk to liberals. But each side disparages the other, and we're careful to steer clear of mixed company. We settle for emotional distance and get used

to the impasse. Many of us despair.

Yet others, many others, quietly yearn for reconciliation within the Catholic community.

Risk of Reconciliation

Restoring broken relationships inevitably involves risk: the risk of deepening open sores and long festering wounds of alienation and estrangement; the risk of facing conflict and violence; the risk of taking off the armor of our pride.

Yet, called by Jesus to right relationships with God, with our fellow human beings, with the earth and all creation, our faith demands each of us to actively seek reconciliation with other people and their ideas.

Reconciliation begins when we accept the tension inherent in the world God has created—a world of contradiction, imperfection, and chaos. Often, our decision to initiate the work of reconciliation comes only when we realize that not doing something is more painful than the risk of taking action. The road toward reconciliation is a laden with our deepest fears and our most mundane distractions.

Reconciliation is not the same as compromise. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, suggests, "We are better persons when we carry tension, as opposed to always looking for its easy resolution."¹ If we resist the urge to resolve our tension too quickly, we may create the conditions for deeper resolution of conflict, leading us to true reconciliation.

This means that we will have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. We need to resist the urge to convince the other side and instead, accept the need slowly, over time, to search

Our faith demands each of us to actively seek reconciliation with other people and their ideas.

of women.

Even temperamental moderates, trying to walk the middle path, what John Henry Newman

Reconciliation in Film and Fiction

Pat McCormick

The Boxer—Daniel Day Lewis plays a former IRA fighter who returns from prison with the hope of turning his back on the violence of his youth.

Pieces of April—April (Katie Holmes) offers a peace meal (lots of Eucharistic symbolism) to her estranged mother and family.

Field of Dreams—Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner) goes on a pilgrimage to get reconciled with his dead father.

Nothing in Common—Tom Hanks reconciles with his philandering, bullying father, Jackie Gleason.

The Barbarian Invasions—Remy Girard finds deathbed reconciliation with his son. (French)

One True Thing—Ellen Gulden (Renee Zellweger) is reconciled with the mother (Meryl Streep).

Remember the Titans—Denzel

Washington and Will Patton reconcile their differences and reject racism.

Dead Man Walking—Helen Prejean's classic tale of forgiveness and reconciliation; even the monstrous murderer achieves humanity in repentance.

The Fisher King—Jeff Bridges is a narcissistic DJ who destroys several lives and must find redemption and forgiveness by helping one man (Robin Williams) he has driven to insanity.

Levity—Ex con Billy Bob Thornton wants to make it right with the woman (Holly Hunter) he widowed.

Ordinary People—Tim Hutton tries to forgive himself for surviving his brother's death, while mom (Mary Tyler Moore) can't bring herself to love this wounded child.

Pay It Forward—Helen Hunt forgives her estranged mother.

The Straight Story—Alvin Straight journeys on his lawn tractor to reconcile with his brother.

The Mission—Jesuit Robert DeNiro repents and is forgiven by the people he sinned against.

The Color Purple—Raises important questions about forgiveness and victims of abuse.

A Lesson Before Dying—Two black men learn about reconciliation while one awaits execution.

Reconciliation Walk—Documents the July 1999 commemoration of the 900th anniversary of the Crusaders' conquest of Jerusalem; modern-day Christians walk among Muslims and Jews to apologize for historical abuses done in the name of Christianity.

Mr. Ives' Christmas—a novel by Oscar Hijuelos', is a wonderful book on the agonizingly hard work of forgiveness. ~

Pat McCormick,
Associate Professor
of Religious
Studies at Gonzaga
University and
film critic for U.S.
Catholic.
mccormick@
calvin.gonzaga.edu

together for mutual understanding. We will have to accept the complex, shifting, always surprising ways the Holy Spirit moves, weaving us together into the one dazzling tapestry in Christ.

We will need courageous leaders, lay, religious and ordained, willing to reconsider hardened party lines, who in Peter Steinfelds words, "press liberals to take seriously conservative anxieties about the loss of Catholic identity," and "press conservatives to treat world-historical shifts in attitudes toward sexuality and the equality of women as more than afflictions."²

The Catholic community must welcome every opportunity for dialogue, following the principles laid down in "Called to be Catho-

lic," the inaugural statement of the Common Ground Initiative founded by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin just before his death:

- We should presume that those with whom we differ are acting in good faith. They deserve civility, charity, and a good-faith effort to understand their concerns.

- We should not substitute labels, abstractions, or blanketing terms, such as *radical feminism*, the *hierarchy*, the *Vatican*, for living complicated realities.

- We should put the best possible construction on differing positions addressing their strongest points rather than seizing upon the most vulnerable aspects in order to discredit them. We should detect the valid insights and

legitimate worries that may underlie even questionable arguments.

Finally, Catholic reconciliation will require us to keep our gaze fixed on Christ, the center of our lives, who holds us tenderly together. As we face the daunting challenge of becoming, as Jesus so dearly wished, more deeply one, we will do well to remember that we already possess the constant sign and enactment of our unity. In the Eucharist Christ holds in balance the tension of our conflicts, and in the breaking of the bread, makes us one. ~

¹ *The Holy Longing: the Search for a Christian Spirituality*. Doubleday, 1999, p. 221.

² *A People Adrift: the Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America*. Simon and Schuster, 2003.



Thank You Chris Hillman

We celebrate Chris' nine years of ministry at IPJC and say good bye to a colleague, friend and community builder as Chris responds to the call of family needs.



It has been a blessing and privilege to collaborate in the work of peace and justice with Chris. Her leadership in our women's programming, including our Convocations and the Women's Justice Circles, has contributed to the empowerment of women in our church and for low-income women seeking to change the systems that affect them. Chris walks with integrity, commitment and passion for mission. She has modeled for us the invitation of the prophet Micah to "love tenderly, act justly, and walk humbly with our God." Chris leaves her staff position this month, but she will remain connected to IPJC both through her associate membership with the Sisters of the Holy Names and her support of the Center.

And the winners are...

\$2000 - Brigid Anderson, Seattle, WA
\$1000 - Jan Trierweiler, Edmonds, WA
\$500 - Arnadene Welton Bean, SNJM, Wilsonville, OR

Special thanks to **all** who gave their time & support, especially our top sellers:
Maureen Rose, OP (2040 tickets)
Margaret Lichter (1800 tickets)
Helen Brennan, SP (1752 tickets)

Change: One Circle at a Time Spanish-speaking Circles

Sumner, St Andrew

ESL and tutoring: Parent concern about assisting their children with school work resulted in a delegation meeting with the Sumner School District Superintendent and requesting a parish-based program for student and parent tutoring.

Wapato, Marie Rose House

Utility Tax Increase: Analyzed the effects of the tax increase on various size households and the resulting burden for low-income families. The subsequent meeting with the mayor discussed ways to ease the burden and find alternative funding to maintain city services.

Sunnyside, Nuestra Casa

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) can only be taken in English which poses a problem for students in ESL classes. The Justice Circle took a two-fold approach to addressing critical questions related to WASL: Holding meetings with the Superintendent of schools and Senator Newhouse; Providing educational forums via Radio KDNA and St. Joseph Church in Sunnyside.

Yakima, St Joseph

Housing: Three circles were held simultaneously, including an adapted circle for men. The core issue was affordable housing and how to access various housing programs and secure funding for permanent housing.

English-Speaking Circles

Bellevue, St. Margaret Episcopal

Access to transportation: Addressed the issues that low-income single mothers face in getting to jobs, appointments, educational opportunities and their children's school activities. Circle participants are working with six area churches and the Newport Hills Community Center to review transportation support that would include community vans, ride share, a community transportation guide, vouchers and a meeting with Metro regarding routes.

Seattle, University Christian Church

Legislative advocacy: Researched issues and met with Senators Cantwell and Murray on budget, livable wages and tax reform as they relate to low-income working women with children.

Spokane, YWCA

Housing: Working with the Spokane Neighborhood Action Program to address how vacant and boarded up houses might be made habitable and available as low-income housing options.

peace & justice center

Investors Celebrate Victories for HIV/AIDS and Human Rights

For the first time in its history, Coca-Cola's board recommended that its shareholders support a resolution filed by an outside party. Compelled by the statistics—there are more than 42 million people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS; over 95% live in the developing world; and only 4% have access to antiretroviral therapy—and the human suffering that they represent, religious shareholders filed a resolution requesting that the board of Coca-Cola review the economic effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the company's business strategy, and its initiatives to date and report to shareholders. The resolution was approved by 97% of Coca-Cola's shareholders. In recommending a vote for the resolution, Coca-Cola said: "It is in [a] spirit of collaboration that we welcome this opportunity to work with our share owners in coordinating additional resources and skills in the fight against HIV/AIDS." We applaud Coca-Cola for taking the first step in responding to this global health crisis and showing that in this instance, Coke is "the real thing."

Religious shareholders filed a shareholder resolution calling on Occidental Petroleum, a company with operations in a region of Columbia affected by human rights abuses, to adopt a comprehensive, transparent and verifiable human rights policy. After dialogue with the company, the resolution was withdrawn when CEO Ray R. Irani, said: "Occidental believes that a policy formalizing our long-standing commitment to support human rights has value for the corporation and its stakeholders. To this end, Occidental is committed to consulting with the proponents of the proposal and others as it works toward the adoption of a formal human rights policy."

The Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment is a member of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility which filed 185 shareholder resolutions with 131 companies during 2003-2004. The resolutions, the majority of which address social and environmental resolutions, are just one part of our interactions with companies. Dialogue is a critical component in effecting socially and environmentally responsible companies.

Northwest Catholic Women's Convocation III

April 22-23, 2005

Mark your calendars, tell your friends!

A gathering of over 2000 women for prayer, ritual, education, empowerment and celebration at the Convention Center in Seattle, WA. Speakers already confirmed include: Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ; Barbara Fiand, SNDdeN; Jamie Phelps, OP; Edwina Gateley, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Nancy Murray, OP...

I P J C Workshops: Schedule Early

Youth Ministry/Confirmation

Interactive workshop including Scripture; the difference between service and justice; applying the principles to justice issues, stories of youth making a difference, prayer and ritual. 1½-2 hours

Come to the Table: Faithful Citizenship

A call to participate in civic life, rooted in Catholic Tradition. Workshop includes: highlights of *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, Scripture, Catholic Social Teaching, issues and tools for action. 3-4 hours

Seeds of Deception, Seeds of Hope

An eco-justice workshop on genetic engineering, Fair Trade and sustainable agriculture. Scripture, ethics and Catholic Social Teaching provide a framework for issues. Includes prayer, ritual, reflection, presentation and discussion. 3 hours

RCIA/Social Concerns

Discerning our call to service and justice in our church and world. Workshop covers Scripture; Catholic Social Teaching; the difference between charity and justice; engaging the pastoral circle process of experience, analysis, theological reflection and action; and tools for action. 2+ hours

Conscience & Clout in the Marketplace

How to be active and responsible investors in critical issues of our global community—global warming, HIV/AIDS, sweatshops, genetically engineered organisms and Fair Trade. Explore socially responsible investment; linkages between personal purchases and global issues; stories of hope; and tools for personal and communal action. 2 hours

Reconciliation Resources

Assefa, Hizkias. "The Meaning of Reconciliation." People Building Peace: European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation. www.xs4all.nl/~conflic1/pbp/part1/2_reconc.htm

Baum, Gregory and Harold Wells (eds). *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

Beiser, Vince. "The Ultimate Forgiveness," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, April 4, 2004.

Bernardin, Cardinal Joseph C. *The Gift of Peace*. Chicago: Loyola, 1997.

Enright, R., and J. North (eds). *Exploring Forgiveness*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

National Pastoral Life Center. "Called to be Catholic: Church in a Time of Peril," 1996. www.nplc.org

O'Connor, Flannery. *Collected Works*. New York, NY: The Library of America, 1988. Much of O'Connor's fiction deals with surprising moments of grace and reconciliation in the lives of ordinary people. "Revelation" is one example.

Osborne, Kenan. *Reconciliation and Justification: The Sacrament of Penance and Its Theology*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.

Schreiter, Robert J. "Creating Circles of Listening in a Parish," The Catholic Common Ground Project. New

York, NY: National Pastoral Life Center. www.nplc.org/commonground/schreiter.htm

Schreiter, Robert J. *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.

Schreiter, Robert J. *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* Mayryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.

Ongoing Projects:

Catholic Common Ground Initiative. National Pastoral Life Center, 18 Bleeker Street, New York, NY 10012-2404. Email: commonground@nplc.org. www.nplc.org

Compassionate Listening Project, PO Box 17, Indianola, WA 98342. 360-297-2280. Founded in 1997, CLP helps Israelis and Palestinians work toward reconciliation through the practice of compassionate listening. www.compassionatelisting.org

Stanford Forgiveness Project, Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention, directed by Frederic Luskin, Ph.D. Researches the relationship between forgiveness and physical health. www.stanford.edu/~alexsox/forgiveness.htm

A Matter of Spirit is a publication of the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

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Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

1216 NE 65th St
Seattle, WA 98115
address service requested

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