

***Putting the peace into development in the context of Modern
Catholic social teaching***
Joint St. Thomas More's Forum with Australian Catholic University
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I am honoured to be invited to give this lecture to the St Thomas More Forum in your capital city. I see Thomas More is the patron of statesmen and politicians. Post-APEC and pre-election, I am sure you will have had enough of both. You will be relieved to know I am neither, although having worked in politics I assure you that politicians need a saintly patron.

What I want to say this evening essentially is that in our contemporary, violent and complex world, the Church, with its teaching on how integral human development leads to peace, has an important message which Caritas is trying to bring alive in its work. There are also new, important aspects to achieving peace within development which I will treat at length under the heading of “reconciliation”. In Caritas Internationalis, the Confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development and social service agencies and one of the largest of its kind in the world, these insights are being integrated into all its work. Caritas Australia is attempting the same exercise. Mention of development in the same breath as peace calls to mind the great encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, whose 40th anniversary we celebrate this year. Let that be my starting point to illustrate what we mean by integral human development.

Pope Paul wrote that development could not be limited to mere economic growth. “In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man”¹(#14). (*We will forgive the Pope his lack of gender awareness but it was 1967.*) He then quotes the French Dominican, Louis-Joseph Lebreton, that economics cannot be separated from human realities nor from the civilisation in which development takes place. What is important is the human person whose development Lebreton described as a ‘spiral staircase’ which goes round and round and which covers all spheres of life – the economic, political, cultural, personal and spiritual. Pope Paul then describes what ‘authentic development’ is: “a development which is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human” (#20) and he describes economic growth as ‘ambivalent’. “Increased possession is not the ultimate goal of nations nor of individuals” (#19), he says at a time when development during the UN decades of development from 1960-80 was seen primarily as an economic issue, where the wealth of the rich, by sharing their technology, would trickle down to the poor. We are still not free of this failed model. The recent report presented to APEC from

¹ *Populorum Progressio*, Pauline Books and Media

the Australian Government – *APEC and the Rise of the Global Middle Class*² - shows that the idea of development as economic growth is not only still with us but, in its neo-liberal capitalist clothing, has got worse. Economic growth, according to the authors, means creating a middle class whose identity is defined by their ability to buy consumer goods. Not *cogito ergo sum* but *Tesco ergo sum*. Pope Paul would have been appalled.

The development of peoples then is not just about economics but essentially about the flourishing of the human person in all his or her aspects. To be authentic, development must be holistic. This development becomes the “new name for peace” (#76). “Peace”, the Pope states, “cannot be limited to a mere absence of war, the result of an ever precarious balance of forces. No, peace is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God which implies a more perfect form of justice among men” (#79). This is the *shalom* of the Old Testament, the right relationship of harmony between God and human beings, between ourselves and with all creation.

Peace and Development: a Caritas approach

For Caritas Internationalis (CI) reflection on development and peace became action at its 1995 General Assembly. It was held against the backdrop of the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia, where many of the development projects had been destroyed because of the violence, where societies and communities had been torn apart and where Christian had slaughtered Christian. It was obvious that relief and development efforts could no longer be isolated from the dynamics of culture and community and that the old way of relief and economic or social development had an important missing element. Our approach had not been holistic enough.

Immediately after the General Assembly, Caritas Internationalis set up a think tank on reconciliation and peace-building with representation from all its seven global regions.

The results of the group’s work have had a profound effect on the way CI now approaches its work. A handbook on reconciliation, outlining various strategies from dealing with conflict prevention to guidelines for a reconciliation programme, was published in 1999, followed by a training manual in 2002 to train Caritas workers as ‘agents of peace’. There are now 4,000 of them, skilled in communicating peace, tolerance and reconciliation, and weaving methods for inserting them into their relief and development work as an integral whole.

Caritas now seeks to view its humanitarian and development work through the lens of peace-building and reconciliation. Just as professional NGOs take a gender perspective in their long-term development work, since women are at the centre of any community development, so Caritas now wants to take a peace-making and reconciliation perspective in its relief and development work, to use mechanisms to bring people together rather than set them apart.

² APEC and the Rise of the Global Middle Class, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, September 2007

A further challenge for Caritas Internationalis was how to turn these key concepts on peace-building and reconciliation from the Christian faith into practical programmes that would be as applicable in a range of settings – from a multi-faith approach in a relatively peaceful country like Mauritania with its overwhelmingly Moslem population to major humanitarian disasters such as were witnessed in East Timor or Rwanda or in the tsunami-affected countries. For many of Caritas Internationalis members, such work was relatively new and ground-breaking and they needed to evolve tools to be as professional in peace-building and reconciliation work as they were in relief and social service work.

The programme that was designed involved an analysis of the kind of conflict being faced, an analysis of the type of intervention that was appropriate and assessing the capacity of the local Caritas to deliver and then gathering information and designing a programme based on strategic planning principles. Training was a priority. There are now 4,000 Caritas workers trained as ‘agents of peace’.

Applying the peace lens

Let me give a few examples of how the ‘peace and reconciliation lens’ is applied. Establishing dialogue between previously warring factions is crucial. Peace pacts don’t necessarily mean people will get on well again with one another. In Rwanda, for example, Caritas supports a programme where Hutu and Tutsi are building houses for vulnerable people. The programme was designed to maximise dialogue between the two groups. They have to discuss everything from who should benefit in the community to building materials and make decisions together. That space for dialogue with a practical purpose also allows people, who have seen horrific sights and who have lost many loved ones and may even have to live again with some of the murderers, to tell their story.

Symbols of people who were previously in dispute standing together are also important. Caritas Croatia began a reconciliation programme with ethnic Serbs who had returned to their homes in Croatia, creating dialogue through conferences and engaging Croatian society with Serb issues. One of the most potent symbols of the new space for hope was, however, a Catholic bishop standing side by side with a Serb Orthodox prelate handing out bicycles to needy Serb children – a picture that appeared in all the Croatian media. The so called ‘Cropax’ peace initiative also brings together young Serbs from Serbia and Croats to ensure that some sort of a beginning of dialogue begins with a new generation.

Community organisation and conflict prevention often come together to create a space of trust in conflict situations. In Colombia, a guerrilla war has been waged for 50 years between various militia groups and the government, causing many deaths and displacement of people. Caritas Colombia started up ‘Communities of Peace’ among displaced people that created a space where they could even negotiate with the militia about returning to their homes. At the same time, the Colombian bishops are engaged in promoting a dialogue for peace among the warring factions.

These are some of the practical ways that Caritas is applying the peace lens. There is, however, a new aspect to this that I have already mentioned and which I would like to unpack a bit more and that is what we mean by reconciliation from the viewpoint of Catholic teaching. Just as ‘development’, in Pope Paul VI’s day, was called the ‘new name for peace’, perhaps ‘reconciliation’ is a new name for development.

Reconciliation: a new name for development?

Reconciliation is, according to Fr Robert Schreiter, a renowned theologian on reconciliation based at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a member of the Caritas working group, “more about spirituality than strategy”, though both are essential. The process of reconciliation is basically one where there is a restoration of good relationships between individuals, groups or nations. It is about getting the shattered parts of us inside us whole again. It is rooted in individuals but has lasting effects on social harmony in society and nations.

There are five aspects to reconciliation that I would like to mention – the spiritual, the social, the psychological, the political and, what I would like to term, the hospitable. All of them are inter-connected.

The Spiritual Aspect

This deals with rebuilding fractured lives so that social reconciliation can happen. States cannot legislate the healing of memories or guarantee forgiveness. There have to be other processes in place. For Christians, reconciliation is a grace, an initiative that comes from God calling the oppressor to repentance and the victim to forgiveness. However, the only way to be knowingly reconciled with God is to be reconciled with other people and we are the agents for making this happen.

First, the process of reconciliation begins with the victim, not with the wrongdoer. Reconciliation processes should restore dignity, humanity, selfhood and life to the victim. It is thus more than the lifting of a burden but being brought to a new place of hope where a new vision of reality can be forged. The reconciliation process cannot begin with wrongdoers since they often refuse to believe they have done wrong (take the examples of two recently deceased dictators, General Pinochet in Chile or Slobodan Milosović of Serbia). The restoration of the humanity of the victim is the first step in restoring the humanity of the wrongdoers whose acts have diminished their own dignity as human beings and in leading them and the society of which they are part to a new possibility.

In order to achieve this, both victim and wrongdoer have to be taken to a “new place” where they can reconstruct the trust that has been lost as the first step in establishing a new relationship and ultimately a new society. That new place is where the wrongdoer repents and the victim no longer seeks revenge. There are three important steps in taking the person to that ‘new place’.

The first is apology, an important first step in the healing process. The apologies issued by the United Church of Canada in 1988 to the First Nation people of Canada followed by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate a few years later were constructed with the victims so that the institutions whose members had committed the physical and sexual abuse of children in their care were given a deeper insight into the pain caused by listening to the victims' stories which were also cathartic for the victims themselves. The apologies were the fundament to create a new, long-term relationship. The apologies by Germany to the Jewish people and by Pope John Paul II in 2000 to those whom the Catholic Church had harmed in the past are powerful reminders that we can all apologise.

The second step in taking people to the 'new place' is repentance and reparation. These constitute public acts that communicate remorse about what has happened in the past. They try to make up for the past and look forward to indicate that such events must never happen again. Repentance needs to be spoken by the perpetrator and reparation may entail financial payment to victims or even imprisonment depending on the deed. This has to be handled sensitively, however. In Rwanda, the perpetrators of the genocide imprisoned by the International Criminal Court for Rwanda have three meals a day and those who are HIV-positive receive anti-retroviral medicines whereas the victims have largely returned to the poverty of before.

The third step is forgiveness. Asking victims to 'forgive and forget' is, however, asking them to become victims again. Forgetting could trivialise the crime committed. If we understand forgiveness as overcoming resentment about the past, then, though the memory persists, the victim is no longer held hostage to the past. That is why it is necessary to let forgiveness come slowly otherwise it will be difficult for the victim to be completely healed. Forgiveness by victims becomes an act of freedom as they are not controlled by what had happened in the past but are taken to a new future where they may not forget the crime perpetrated but remember it in a new way.

The Social Aspect

This is trying to ensure that structures and processes are in place to reconstruct a shattered society after conflict on the basis of justice, truth and trust. While the spiritual aspect deals with more individual and personal ways of reconciling people, there must also be a collective structural element that provides initiatives that give hope to society and are linked to long-term transformative efforts. Just, democratic structures have to be put in place to punish the wrongdoers, provide some reparation for the victims and to ensure that the social chaos that normally follows conflict with a rise in organised crime, murders, domestic violence, child abuse and sexual offences, let alone issues of poverty, is mitigated. People must be shown that their politicians are sincere in constructing a new society where the injustices of the past will not be repeated.

Part of the social response to conflict is humanitarianism. Many faiths have humanitarian agencies which must learn not only to 'do no harm' but 'do good' by being conflict sensitive. In Sri Lanka, for example, in order that the tsunami did not become a focus for social disharmony, our Caritas there tried to work as much as possible with the Buddhist, Moslem, Hindu as well as Christian communities, choosing to buy goods for the people

affected from merchants of all faiths rather than one. Now, during the commemorations of the tsunami and related events to stop conflict spreading all the faith traditions try to speak with one voice. In Macedonia, in a mixed Albanian-Slav (which means mostly Moslem/Orthodox) area, there were tensions between the two groups. The local school had an Albanian shift in the morning and a Macedonian one in the afternoon. Tensions were lessened through a Caritas programme providing funds for a new, improved curriculum for both Albanian and Macedonian pupils led by a governing council of mixed parents. Through problem-solving and for the sake of their children, the parents mixed as never before and tensions have eased and the prejudices of before are gradually disappearing as they focus on a safe future for their children.

The Psychological Aspect

Though reconciliation can be mainly termed as social and spiritual, there also has to be some psychological healing of the wounds left by hatred and conflict. As Caritas, we are increasingly involved in psycho-social trauma counselling at the end of conflicts. For religions, the use of rituals are significant, giving reconciliation important visible public expression, another site of multi-religious action. Use can be made of traditional methods of reconciliation that may have been neglected. Caritas Papua New Guinea revived these in a bloody dispute between two tribes in the Highlands. Negotiations were complex and took two years but the result was successful and the two rival tribes ended up being so reconciled that they constructed a road together to connect their villages, putting the healing to practical use.

The Political Aspect

This aspect ensures that just laws are brought in where the perpetrators are brought to justice and a more just society is created particularly with an eye to the poorest. It should ensure above all just laws which are not just on the statute book but actually kept. That requires the vigilance of religious leaders who have access to the top leaders that they do not introduce policies that might undermine the peace that has been created. Again, as for social reconciliation, this requires training. Tròcaire, the Caritas member in Ireland, has a programme in Mozambique involving the Catholic bishops' conference, the grouping of the Protestant churches and the Islamic community in monitoring the budgets of the government to ensure that money goes towards spending on eradicating poverty and education rather than too much on arms or into someone's pocket. The development of people after conflict and their being reconciled to one another are intimately linked.

The Hospitality Aspect

Reconciliation leads to the creation of safe and hospitable places, recalling Henri Nouwen's insistence that for us to move "from hostility to hospitality" is one of the most important lessons of the spiritual life. The spaces can be physical and social. The physical space must be within what is familiar to victims and where they are valued and their humanity confirmed and where their experience of hospitality can prepare the way for real reconciliation. This is an opportunity to create 'healing' or 'listening' circles where the victim feels safe and welcomed and can come to healing through telling his or her story.

After the years of repression under Pinochet in Chile, the bishops there set up ‘houses of reconciliation’ where the truth of people’s experience could be told and healing could take place. In Sri Lanka after the tsunami, Buddhist monks near Galle in the south opened the courtyard of their monastery to the communities living in tents supplied by the local Caritas. In Palestine, Caritas Jerusalem tries to create spaces where Christian and Moslem Palestinians meet with their fellow Jewish youngsters from Israel. Otherwise they would never meet and every Palestinian would remain a terrorist in an Israeli’s eyes and every Israeli an oppressor in a Palestinian’s.

In Israel, a group called Rabbis for Human Rights, which works with Caritas in peace-making and reconciliation, promotes reconciliation in a courageous way. When they hear of the houses of innocent Palestinians being demolished by the Israeli Defence Force, they go as neighbours to help rebuild the houses - practical help combined with reconciliation.

These are just a few of the ways that we can all work together to bring reconciliation and healing of fractured societies. It is important that we reflect now on what concrete actions we can take to show our multi-cultural world that we can indeed live in harmony and respect with one another. They say of astronauts that when they look down on the Earth they see not just the beauty of our planet but its inter-connectedness. This is what we have to foster in people, without their losing their faith identity. In South Africa, they call it *ubuntu* – I am because we are. We must move the world’s people gently away from what sets us apart to what makes us similar – our humanity, our values, our respect for life, our wanting the best for our children.

Reconciliation must form an integrated part of peace-building, encompassing the spiritual, the social, the psychological, the political and the hospitable, allowing people to live not only in a sustained peace but in a way where they flourish as human beings. It becomes then a part of integral human development.

The great Cistercian monk and peace guru, Thomas Merton, wrote in the 1960s: “If this task of building a peaceful world is the most important task of our time, it is also the most difficult. It will, in fact, require far more discipline, more sacrifice, more planning, more thought, more cooperation and more heroism than ever war demanded.” His words in the light of a world that at times seems aflame with hatred take on a new urgency for us all.

The last image I want to leave you with is of an old lady I met in post-tsunami Sri Lanka. She had been rescued from the waves by her son who was then impaled by a pole and carried away. She had lost home, child, livelihood, all in one swoop. The local community with NGO help were gradually giving her the means to go on living – not just food, water and shelter but companionship and the sharing of their humanity with someone who felt totally deprived of hope, someone who was almost stripped of her humanity. Restoring her hope means not just the provision of material things but working on what will sustain her in the future – a society that allows her to live in peace and harmony, a government that protects her interests and doesn’t oppress her, with laws that allow her to worship as she wishes, with a community where she feels in a safe space to

raise her family and with an environment where she can breathe freely. That is a development which is authentic, which leads to *shalom*, the world of right relationship and of lasting peace. Reconciliation lies at its heart, as it lies at the heart of the Gospel. With this added element, 'development' then becomes the sharing of God's life. "The glory of God is a human being fully alive", said St Ireneaus in the 2nd century. This could be a summary of what authentic development is in the 21st century.

Thank you for your attention.