

# sedos

## Bulletin 2004

Vol. 36, No. 5/6 - May/June

### *“Strategies for Building Reconciliation in Environments of Violence”*



**SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR  
2004**

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# *Editorial*

*May the Love of the Spirit fill our hearts and make us true messengers of His Peace.*

This Bulletin comes as a special issue to share with all our readers some of the rich pickings of our Annual Seminar. This year we gathered at the *Salesianum* in an effort to understand more about Reconciliation and Pardon, Violence in the World and its causes.... We also shared our views about personal and community violence. Altogether the Seminar has been a fruitful and moving experience.

It is difficult to summarise the proceedings of the Seminar since we did not have conferences and Speakers talking to us about the theories of Violence and Reconciliation. We worked in small groups sharing our own experiences, our own histories of hurt and healing, letting the Spirit move us to a deeper understanding of the possible causes of our violence in word and deed. It is for this reason that what we present in this number of the Bulletin is different from the usual set of logically structured articles. Today we hope to convey to all our readers the sharing of all those who attended the Seminar but in written form, as a synthesis or points for reflection since it is not possible to convey the feeling and atmosphere which made up the most important part of the sharing.

Fr **Piero Trabucco, IMC**, President of SEDOS, introduced and welcomed the participants and explained the rationale that moved the Executive of SEDOS to choose *Reconciliation* as the Topic of our Seminar. We then continue with the reflections of Fr **Brian Starken, CSSp.**, who, as our facilitator, smoothly led us into the heart of the topic with its complexity and different approaches in analysing the causes as well as the implications. He stressed how Space and Time are but two of the important components of healing and Reconciliation.

Fr **Leonel Narváez Gómez, IMC**, our only Speaker, came from Bogotá to share with us his experience in the area of pardon and Reconciliation. As director of the School of pardon and Reconciliation and the programme ESPERE, his experiences and insights gave the participants valuable information and the hope that Reconciliation is not only possible but a fundamental part of our missionary endeavour.

The participants were divided into small groups and during the whole Seminar were sharing, at a very deep and personal level, their own experiences, those of their Communities and Congregations and those of the places of work. The process of sharing we experienced was much more enriching and is more difficult to express than the guidelines and points we now offer for your reflection. How convey to our readers the feelings and emotions in listening to and speaking about our personal experiences and those of our brothers and sisters? How convey to the readers the painful and yet healing process through which some final points came to be written as a synthesis? We can only offer our readers in summary form, the synthesis of our sharing, not just as reading material but as points to reflect and meditate on.

After our exchanges we dwelt on the questions brought up by our Missionaries on how to help those sent to environments of violence: formation, grass-root action and follow-up support. We ended with some suggestions on what SEDOS can do as a facilitator or mediator in the formation of our brothers and sisters.

Finally, we offer the valuable comments of four members who listened attentively to the proceedings of the Seminar and made an appraisal. Our warmest thanks go to the teams of Moderators.

Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP  
Executive Director of SEDOS

## **“Strategies for Building Reconciliation in Environments of Violence”**

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The idea to dedicate the 2004 Annual Seminar to the theme of reconciliation goes back to the 2001 SEDOS Seminar, when over a hundred missionaries “dreaming” of mission in the future sought to indicate concrete ways that today’s mission ought to take. In fact on looking at the scenario in which mission is now developing, it was not difficult for them to perceive then that to be missionaries faithful to the Gospel of Christ in the escalating violence, the wars, and the ethnic and religious tension present on all the continents, means to promote pardon and reconciliation.

Seventy-five people attended the Seminar which took place at the *Salesianum* in Rome from 18 to 22 May 2004. The five-day residential meeting allowed people to get to know one another and fostered lively dialogue between the participants. The meeting was an experiential one, in that reflection on the rewarding theme of reconciliation is well-known today. Special attention was devoted to the concrete means missionaries use to further the journey of pardon and reconciliation. The work in groups led to a rich exchange of experiences, above all the result of missionary experience in many countries where violence and war cause major tragedies.

At the end of the first day, it was noted that members tended to analyse our own communities and personnel where tension can always be present rather than situations of violence in mission stations. It became clear that any person, any missionary who wishes to become a minister of forgiveness and reconciliation, must first experience the same process him/herself. In this way through the methodology of the groups, each one was able to discern in his/her own life moments of grace made possible by that process however painful, but always healthy, of pardon and reconciliation.

Two moderators guided the work:

- **Brian Starken, CSSp.**, has ten years’ mission experience in Sierra Leone, and is now very busy working for *Caritas Internationalis*. He suggested the participants reflect on the interesting biblical journey of reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers and then on the relationship between Jacob and Esau. He then guided the members, step by step, to understand the importance of reconciliation in one’s personal, community and mission life.

- **Leonel Narváez Gómez, IMC**, who comes from a ten-year missionary experience in Kenya and as many years in the zone of guerrilla warfare in his own country, Colombia, has an academic specialization in reconciliation and pacification. Now he directs a team which teaches forgiveness and reconciliation (ESPERE) in Colombia and other Latin American countries. The presentation of his own experience, and those of other people who have worked on this project, had a profound impact on the assembly. He showed how actual and acute the need is to study the subject and offer an effective service in this field.

The Seminar ended with a clear awareness that a new missionary commitment awaits us so as to respond to a society and a world suffering increasingly from the many wounds inflicted on them in different ways. We have understood that we are not alone in this engagement: many other brothers and sisters, Christian or not, are seeking to bring about the dream of a more tranquil, friendly and solidary world.

A very warm thank you goes to Fr **Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP**, Director of SEDOS, and to the Executive Committee for the excellent preparation and result of the Seminar.

We eventually parted company, but not without first setting the date and place for the **next meeting**. It will be held at the *Casa Divin Maestro* in **Ariccia from 3 to 7 May 2005**.

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## “Strategie di riconciliazione in situazioni di violenza”

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L'idea di dedicare il convegno annuale del 2004 al tema della riconciliazione è nata nel corso del Seminario di SEDOS del 2001, quando oltre 100 missionari, “sognando” la missione del futuro, hanno voluto indicare i cammini concreti che la missione odierna dovrebbe percorrere. Guardando infatti allo scenario in cui si sviluppa la missione oggi, non fu difficile per loro percepire che, nel crescendo di violenza, guerra, tensioni etniche e religiose presenti in tutti i continenti, essere missionari fedeli al Vangelo di Cristo, significa percorrere il cammino del perdono e della riconciliazione.

Il Seminario, svoltosi nel *Salesianum* di Roma dal 18 al 22 maggio 2004, ha visto la partecipazione di 75 persone. La convivenza di cinque giorni ha permesso una buona conoscenza vicendevole e ha favorito un dialogo intenso tra tutti i partecipanti. Il convegno ha avuto un taglio prettamente esperienziale, in quanto la riflessione sul tema della riconciliazione è oggi molto ricca e conosciuta. Ci si è voluti confrontare soprattutto sui mezzi concreti che i missionari utilizzano nel loro ministero per favorire un cammino di perdono e di riconciliazione. I lavori di gruppo hanno permesso un ricco scambio di esperienze, frutto soprattutto dell'esperienza missionaria in molti Paesi dove violenze e guerre causano le maggiori tragedie.

Al termine del primo giorno, si è notato subito che l'interesse dei partecipanti mirava non tanto ad analizzare le situazioni di violenza nei luoghi di missione, quanto piuttosto a prendere in considerazione le nostre stesse comunità e persone, dove le tensioni possono sempre essere presenti. È apparso infatti chiaro che qualsiasi persona, qualsiasi missionario che desideri diventare ministro di perdono e di riconciliazione, deve innanzitutto sperimentare in se stesso il processo in questione. E così, attraverso la metodologia dei gruppi, tutti hanno potuto rileggere nella propria vita i momenti di grazia, resi possibili attraverso quel processo forse doloroso, ma sempre salvifico, del perdono e della riconciliazione.

Due esperti hanno guidato i lavori:

- **Brian Starken, CSSp.**, ricco di una esperienza decennale di missione in Sierra Leone, ed ora grazie ad un intenso impegno di lavoro presso *Caritas Internationalis*, ha guidato i partecipanti attraverso un'interessante riflessione biblica sul cammino di riconciliazione di Giuseppe con i suoi fratelli e poi sulle relazioni tra Giacobbe ed Esau. Ha inoltre condotto i partecipanti al Convegno, passo dopo passo, a percepire l'importanza della riconciliazione nella vita personale, comunitaria e di missione.

- **Leonel Narváez Gómez, IMC**, dopo un'esperienza missionaria di dieci anni in Kenya e un'altra altrettanto prolungata in zone di guerriglia nel suo Paese di origine, la Colombia, ha potuto specializzarsi accademicamente sul tema della riconciliazione e della pacificazione. Ora presiede un *team* di lavoro che offre scuole di perdono e di riconciliazione (ESPERE) in Colombia e in altri Paesi dell'America Latina. La presentazione dell'esperienza sua e di tante persone che collaborano in tale progetto ha avuto profonde ripercussioni sull'assemblea, dimostrando quanto attuale e vivo sia il bisogno di approfondire la tematica e di offrire un efficace servizio in questo campo.

Abbiamo concluso il nostro Seminario con la chiara consapevolezza che un nuovo impegno missionario ci attende, quale risposta ad una società e a un mondo sempre più sofferenti a causa delle tante ferite che in modi e maniere diverse riceve. Abbiamo inoltre compreso che non siamo soli in questo impegno: tante sorelle e fratelli, cristiani e non, cercano di realizzare lo stesso sogno di avere un mondo più sereno, fraterno e solidale.

Un sentito ringraziamento va a P. **Carlos Rodriguez Linera, OP**, (Direttore del SEDOS) che assieme al Comitato Esecutivo ha concretizzato sia la preparazione che la realizzazione del Seminario.

Ci siamo infine salutati dandoci appuntamento **per il prossimo Seminario** Residenziale, organizzato da SEDOS, che avrà luogo **dal 3 al 7 maggio 2005**, presso la *Casa Divin Maestro* ad **Ariccia**.

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***About  
Reconciliation***

- **Brian Starken, CSSp.** -

## ***What Reconciliation Means***

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***(Wednesday, 19 May 2004)***

When working in reconciliation one of the difficulties we have is imagining what reconciliation looks like!

One way of imagining just what reconciliation is, is that it is about *making space*.

This space can be a *physical space* where people feel safe and free from harm. A safe haven — if you like. This is particularly true where people may be under physical threat, are victims of violence or human rights abuses. One of the great things that the Church did in Chile was to provide 'safe houses' where victims could go and tell their stories without fear of being intimidated by the authorities.

It can be a *social space* where people may speak their minds, think aloud and talk together about the future. Marriage counselling provides this kind of space for people. So too do mediators.

It can also be about *internal space* where a person can be free from the burdens of the past. People in trauma or hurt can feel very trapped, so can people living under unjust regimes, suffering human rights abuses or whatever. People who are victims of violence — either in the home or in the workplace — or torture victims — do not feel at home in their own bodies.

Reconciliation is about opening up spaces — helping people to imagine what life is like without violence, fear, hate. People need space to make new choices and this involves very deep, personal emotions and decisions.

People need safe, *hospitable spaces*. If we are working in war zones this may mean providing food, shelter — and reducing fear and anxiety. Hospitable spaces allow people to be thankful

again. Once they feel secure and welcome they are open to the possibility of reconciliation.

Spaces for reconciliation have to be places where we can act graciously and experience graciousness. Breakdowns in relationships are ultimately about trust. Trust can only be restored and reconciliation achieved if we are reasonably assured that our trust will not be broken again. Trust can only grow in freedom — it cannot be forced or threatened. Hospitable spaces help us to rebuild trust as we experience graciousness — it restores our broken spirit.

Spaces for reconciliation are places where we can discover or build something new — certainly we can discover our own personal strengths — renew our confidence and ability to build something new with others.

The Babel experience.... Otherness was seen as a curse and gave us diversity of language. It became a scapegoat for all our ills. All the insecurities and fears we have. We have a lack of tolerance for the other — or for otherness (refugees in Ireland).

Nowadays we can talk about globalisation and internationality — yet we cannot cope with otherness.

The Pentecost experience is a model for working in reconciliation and working for peace. Only the Spirit can make diversity something positive — but it will not take away otherness.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit otherness became something to be celebrated.

Source: *Peacebuilding: A Caritas Training Manual*, pp. 26-27.

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- **Brian Starken, CSSp.** -

## ***Different Levels at Which We Need Reconciliation***

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### **Introduction**

The topic that we are going to consider for the next few days is reconciliation — and it is very broad because there are many dimensions to it. Mostly when we think of reconciliation — because of our background and training — we think of the theological concept. I am not a theologian by any stretch of the imagination — so there will not be too much theology. Broadly speaking reconciliation is about *restoring relationships* — and you do not need a lot of theology to do that. By way of introduction we can say that there are different levels at which we need to restore relationships — at which we need reconciliation.

### **God**

At a very spiritual level we talk about reconciliation with God — restoring our relationship with God — and this is the key to our own spiritual lives and the key to our faith lives as well. We need reconciliation with God because we are sinners, we break or weaken the relationship with God and we need to ask for forgiveness. In our catholic tradition we have the sacrament of reconciliation — to restore and to strengthen this relationship. It is a ritual that give us access to the forgiveness of a God who loves us — and whose forgiveness is always there for us when we ask for it.

Our relationship with God is central to all our other relationships — so we need to restore our relationship with God before moving on to restore our other relationships. That does not always happen, of course, because we sometimes tend to put our relationship with God in a special compartment — and often isolate it from the other relationships in our lives.

### **Self**

When we receive forgiveness from God it should lead to reconciliation with ourselves — “the self”. We carry a lot of baggage around with us — we have a lot of hurt in our lives, a lot of anger, a lot of trauma, and a lot of unresolved issues that we have picked up along the journey of life. Sometimes these unresolved issues can go back to childhood, to adolescence, to school, to

formation, to superiors, to appointments, the missions, bishops, confreres — and even to our own pastoral work. We have feelings that along the way we were treated badly, we were treated unjustly; we were misunderstood or were never allowed to reach our full potential in one way or another. They are the traumas of life — and in many cases we either try to ignore them, or simply come to an accommodation and try to live with them.

We often suffer from *secondary trauma* — simply because of the work we are involved in — in pastoral ministry we constantly deal with people who are victims in one way or another and some of their trauma rubs off on us — and takes its toll.

### **Social**

Perhaps the level of reconciliation that affects us most is social and interpersonal — reconciling those around us, those we live and work with — and those in our social community. We need to reflect the values of justice and mercy, respect and love in our own relationship — especially if we are to be effective ministers of reconciliation ourselves. Conflict — as we shall see during the week — is inevitable and it arises from our social relationships — and because we have conflict we need reconciliation.

### **Creation**

We can add another dimension to reconciliation which we might call respect for creation or respect for the integrity of Creation. From a Christian perspective this recognises that humans cannot be fully reconciled with God if we abuse and treat God's Creation with disrespect. We are called to care for Creation.

### **Ministry**

As religious we are called in a special way to be ministers of reconciliation — we are channels of reconciliation for one another and for the community we serve. This is a sacred ministry that can only be enhanced by developing a spirituality of reconciliation ourselves.



- *Brian Starken, CSSp.* -

## *Ministering in Reconciliation*

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*(Thursday, 20 May 2004)*

I would consider that working in reconciliation is a very sacred ministry — it is sacred because we are dealing most often with people who have suffered, whose humanity has been broken and who are very vulnerable. I also consider it sacred because we are entering the most sacred of spaces in people's lives.

I don't think it is a ministry that we can take for granted — it is a ministry that we have to earn a right to. When I started working in reconciliation I had no idea where to turn to for help. I thought, perhaps a bit naïvely, that the Church could be of great help — because of its long tradition of exercising a ministry of reconciliation. The Church certainly has vast resources to bring to reconciliation — I hope that I have shared some of those with you this evening — but it has not always proved itself worthy of its call to reconciliation. Rwanda, South Africa, Haiti, Argentina. We often decry violence — but limit ourselves to certain kinds of violence — we often decry the violence of the oppressed and fail to acknowledge the violence of oppressive and unjust structures — which may not be physical but is no less violent.

There were, of course, examples of where the Church, and individuals within the Church did some extraordinary work in the face of very oppressive regimes. Cardinal Rual de Silva in Chile — houses of reconciliation, etc. Likewise in the Philippines and Nicaragua. Even where the official Church fell down there were individuals who ploughed a lone furrow against injustice and oppression.

If we are to work in reconciliation it is vitally important that we have credibility with the victims — and that credibility has to be earned — whether it is by an institution or by an individual.

To work in reconciliation we need to be very good **listeners** — we need to be trusting and trusted listeners. It is difficult to listen with patience — because victims may have to tell their story over and over again — and it is important that we listen as if we were hearing the story for the first time. We need to listen in a way that is non-judgmental. Once we start making judgements

we are taking over the victim's story.

**Waiting** too is important. As reconcilers we must be prepared to wait with the victims. In this country we have become very poor at waiting. We don't like waiting for busses, standing in queues. Waiting is considered lost time and lost time is wasted time. Africa was great for knocking the edges off anybody in a hurry. Waiting has a capacity to make us comfortable with ourselves, to get in tune with ourselves. For victims time is important too — but in a different way — time is the healer.

**Attention and compassion** are other characteristics needed in order to work in reconciliation. I place presence and attention very close together. If you are present to and with victims when they are suffering then you have credibility to be present to them in the reconciliation process. Attention requires a certain calmness in our own lives — the contemplatives are great people for practising attention. Attention to the healing of memories is the essence of reconciliation.

Attention is also the basis of compassion. It is also the basis of the ability to wait and to be with, to walk along side the victim at the victim's pace. The root of the word compassion is literally 'to suffer with'. Attention is important in building up a relationship of trust and safety.

I will give the last word to St Francis — 'where there is injury let me sow pardon'. He didn't say where there is wrongdoing let me give pardon — or — where there are crimes let me offer pardon. No. "Where there is injury let me sow pardon". Injury implies the possibility of healing. Healing has to do with restoring a life to health — it rises above the question of right and wrong (doctors) — it even rises above the question of good and evil. Pardon here is more than forgiveness — it is doing what is necessary to restore health. As ministers of reconciliation our goal is to promote healing (of body and spirit) in any manner of which we are capable.

Francis calls on us only to sow. Sowing does not imply that something is fully grown, only that the seeds of possibility will grow to fruition.

## Conclusions

We have looked at various ways that time and reconciliation are linked in people's lives. Of course, we know that things are not quite as straight forward as I have presented. A much more wholistic approach is needed for working in reconciliation. Reconciliation is not like baking a cake — you follow the instructions and *voilà* — a cake.

We know that reconciliation involves people and so — many activities are at play and often they are at play together. We can't look at reconciliation as a sequence of events that take place in a straight line — one after the other. People and their relationships are dynamic, interdependent and evolving all the time.

In a sense, reconciliation becomes more like a dance than walking in a straight line. It is like a dance because there can be so many activities taking place at the same time. We tend to see justice, truth, peace, mercy and hope as values — because we describe them as something abstract. We need to see them as continual sources of power and activity that impact on people's lives and relationships. We need to see them as activities rather than objects. We need to give them human qualities — give them voices — give them the capacity to act. We seek truth, we extend mercy, we do justice. we live peace. Maybe in religious parlance we can call them virtues — qualities that have power and capacity.

Maybe we can see them as actors on a stage. They are all characters — they are interdependent and they interact — yet — only one will have centre stage at any given moment — while the others move back and prepare to come forward.

Managing reconciliation requires us to create a process that lets us interact with each of these voices and at the same time to stay in touch with each of the others.

## A Theology of Reconciliation (Matthew Chapter 18)

We often take bits of this Chapter in isolation but we need to see each part in the context of the whole Chapter. It begins with a question about power and ends with a parable about debt repayments. In between there are reflections on power — offense — forgiveness.

The Chapter exhorts individuals to be reconcilers and the Church as a whole to be a reconciling community.

The Chapter begins with a reflection about power — who will be the greatest? It is a concern common among all of us — including the Church. Every hierarchical society or institution — social structure generates anxieties about status, prestige and professional advancement.

Jesus takes a little child — unless you change and become like a little child ... Jesus is not talking about an attitude of innocence — he is talking about social standing — children at the bottom.

The Disciples aspired upwards — Jesus invites them to solidarity downwards.

On leading others astray and the consequences to potential offenders.

Jesus further dramatizes the issues of power and vulnerability.

The Disciples should not scandalize — should not take advantage of those who are weaker — or those with less power.

The Disciples are concerned about being the biggest — the greatest. Jesus is concerned with not taking advantage of the smallest.

Our exercise of power will be judged by our treatment of, and our relationship to, the weak and marginalized.

When people abuse their power someone is damaged or left out. He knew injustices would occur because of abuse of power but the Church is called to embody an alternative model in which such abuse is abnormal and unacceptable.

This follows an injunction not to use hurtful behaviour. It is far better to deprive ourselves of something than to get it at somebody else's expense.

People who are marginalized are seen as dispensable and of no value.

The Lost Sheep (back = offender; forward = victim).

Both those who abuse power and those who are marginalized by the abuse of power can be the 'lost' ones in our community.

In either case we are to seek out and restore to our community those who are excluded or alienated.

The health and wholeness of our community are not determined by the influential few — or even the majority — but by the welfare of the weakest.

The last part — is about forgiveness. (Love and forgiveness — here — justice and forgiveness).

Judicial courts operate on a win/lose scenario. Jesus tells us that the Community/Church should support the offender and the victim and help the others in arriving at a decision that restores relationships — then we are co-operating with the grace of God.

When the Church takes seriously the process of transforming conflict — then Jesus is present.

All of this leads on to the parable of the debts — if forgiveness is limited — then a system of retribution prevails and the cycle of injustice continues.

It is only by experiencing the truth of God's unlimited forgiveness in conflict that we can offer an alternative to the world of injustice and violence around us.

We need to practice that forgiveness in our own lives — then we can be a model for the wider society.

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***WORLD MISSION  
CONFERENCE***

**Athens (Greece)**

*9/16 May 2005*

***Sharing and Working  
Together ...***

**- *English Groups* -**

# ***English Groups (A+B)***

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## **1. Reconciliation PROCESS**

Enable gracious, non-judgemental SAFE SPACE

Listen/understand LANGUAGE including body language

Give TIME to tell stories, name truth

## **2. SKILLS/ATTITUDES for conflict resolution**

Learn the language of reconciliation

DEVELOP PROCESSES for reconciliation

... Identify root causes

Waiting, patience, humility

LEARN to deal with DIFFERENCES by accepting , celebrating the GIFTS OF 'THE OTHER'

## **3. COLLABORATION and Networking**

... Within Congregation and without ...

Links — e.g. San Egidio, Focolari, World Religions for Peace, World Council of Churches

## **4. SPIRITUALITY**

Reconciliation as integral part of MISSION

Becoming Disciples of Peace ... "Seekers", not "Knowers"

Connection with Integrity of Creation

PRAYER

Process of Reconciliation

Forgiveness as GRACE takes TIME

Brings liberation

Imperatives of the Gospel

## **5. Possible SOURCES of conflict**

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES/Interculturality in Society and Congregation

RACISM unacknowledged?

DIFFERENCES in believe systems > different understanding of 'God'

## **6. FORMATION needs to address Spirituality of Reconciliation at all levels**

LEARN how our Context

Culture

Personal Experience

Affect our Worldview and our "Truth"

We carry the learning of childhood

7. ISSUES/QUESTIONS???

Role of LEADERSHIP in conflict situations

- Bringing People together
- Not taking on other individual's "Work"/Responsibility

Religion as SOURCE of conflict and division

FUNDAMENTALISM

Slogans/"Theologies" Change — PROBLEMS OF THE PEOPLE

"JUSTICE" > "RECONCILIATION"

**? Does our quality of presence help Reconciliation?**

**? Do we bring principles of Peace building to Ministry?**

**? Are we aware of our own implication in Oppression?**

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**The USG-UISG Joint Commission  
on Justice, Peace  
*and*  
Integrity of Creation**

is Organising a two-day Seminar on

***"Just Intercultural Relations in Our Congregations"***

– 11/12 November 2004 –

Brothers of the Christian Schools  
Via Aurelia, 476 – Rome

Speaker & Facilitator:

***Rev. Eric Law***

*(Anglican Priest, Chinese-American,  
Expert in Intercultural Relations and Communications)*

*For more information please contact*

***Br. Anton Roeper, Secretary USG-UISG, JPIC Commission***

*or*

***Fr. Jozef Lapauw, CICM – Co-President***

***WELCOME!!!***



## ***English Groups (C+D+E)***

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### ***Issues Arising from Shared Experiences***

#### **A. What Causes Violence?**

Injustice  
Fundamentalism  
Abuse of Power/Caste System/Poverty/Frustration  
Ignorance, Fear, Anger/Lies, Corruption  
Male/Female relationships  
Language

#### **B. Possible Processes/Tools for Reconciliation**

Discover the underlying factors – many situations are messy, ambiguous, depend on personal perceptions of victim/aggressor/truth/etc.  
Existing structures in the Church which could support process of Reconciliation  
e.g. Healing Ministry, Sacrament of Reconciliation, etc., Education, Empowerment  
A Spirituality of Reconciliation  
Need for professional training in Conflict/Resolution/Mediation  
Communication is vital in Reconciliation  
Creating spaces to foster trust, compassion, LISTENING  
Empathise with victims of trauma  
Employ diocesan structures  
Outside facilitator can help

#### **C. Questions**

Who is the real victim?  
Who is the real perpetrator?  
What is the truth – whose truth?  
How to proceed in the absence of one party in the Reconciliation process?  
How to interpret a given situation clearly? (Caution: not all issues are cultural, some border on personality)  
How to break the cycle of VIOLENCE – FEAR – VIOLENCE?

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# ***English Groups (A+B)***

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## ***Dealing With Violence Constructively***

### **1) With the victims and the perpetrator at the same time:**

- Ø Listen to their stories and lead the dialogue until it comes to a common understanding.
- Ø If understanding cannot be achieved, one possibility is to “change the sides” in order to let the victim “play” the perpetrator and vice-versa.
- Ø If the different parties come from different countries/cultures, it is necessary to figure out what is going to work in which culture.
- Ø Recognize that it is possible to swing from compassion and understanding to condemnation of both the victim and the perpetrator.
- Ø Some victims are attractive, but others can be unattractive. Some know how to engage others in their story; some are not skilled in this area and can often be ignored.
- Ø Skilled intervention is needed to determine when the victim’s story needs to become a new story so they can move on.

### **2) As a third party, assisting a group in a non-violent way**

- Ø Pastoral planning is very important to avoid haphazard responses. Enlist both religious and non-religious allies in order to provide maximum support.
- Ø Clarify the purpose (why am I doing this?)
- Ø Respect the person; be gentle in speaking and acting.
- Ø Help negotiate with the respective offices, authorities (spokesperson).
- Ø Build up some constructive strategies. (Be creative: How is your family?)
- Ø Be clear about your own rights (know your rights and speak out the truth in a non-violent way).
- Ø Network with other groups who work against violence.
- Ø Be careful not to pre-judge people who have already been condemned by popular opinion or the press.
- Ø Accompany the whole process with prayer; be aware of your own fear during the process, since you are also exposing yourself to a danger; one never knows how a process will end.
- Ø Be connected with a good supervisor who can track what is happening within you. This person will see the bigger picture and your place within it.
- Ø It can take years to process trauma. Writing and taping stories can help with healing.

### 3) In our own communities/regions/provinces

- Ø Organize “Conflict Partnering” for the traumatized victims of violence (abuse), with people trained for this.
- Ø Form boards for hearing and listening to the suffering from conflicts and/or violence.
- Ø Recognize that culture shock which is a product of being in a culture with extreme poverty or trauma can take time and space to process, even for those with short term exposure.
- Ø Speedy communication (e-mail) could become another form of violence if time for reflection is not provided before it is sent.
- Ø Crisis management doesn't always allow time to reflect. Leave space for the darkness. Allow people to be broken.
- Ø We need to talk about violence, acknowledge it, examine its roots and the effects it has on each of us.

#### Some strategies:

- Ø Give witness as a community of sisters-brothers by personally living the reconciliation, forgiveness, non-violent way of achieving peace
  - Ø Examine how we deal with the basic needs of the poor and marginalized. Why do rebel armies continue? What is the real cause of the poverty of violence?
  - Ø Acknowledge our own limitations (initial and ongoing). Deal with non-violent ways for achieving the rights of the people. Do not stress one value in formation at the cost of the others. For example: overstressing good personality, self-worth, self-importance could lead to forgetting the importance and worth of the other person
  - Ø The book, “Dead Man Walking” by Sr Helen Prejean is a good example of dealing with violence in a constructive way.
  - Ø When we work as mediators in conflict situations, we must be able to forget ourselves in order to be able to hold the broken pieces of those persons with whom we want to reconcile.
  - Ø Communities could be developed for those who just want time to be quiet for at least three months – no apostolate, time for prayer and renewal.
  - Ø Provide internships for leadership training and stress strategies for dealing with personnel who have been in traumatic situations.
  - Ø Use of body work for dealing with stress/trauma has been proven.
  - Ø Send a member of the Congregation who is trained in counselling into the trauma area for at least three months to allow personnel to debrief with a professional.
  - Ø Invite other members of the Congregation to live in the trauma area, even for a month, in order to give personnel assigned there a stronger support system.
  - Ø Develop strategies and policies within Congregations for post-traumatic stress treatment. Congregations should train someone to accompany those coming out of trauma situations. We lose talent because we don't pay attention to people's needs.
  - Ø Harness the power of children in dealing with trauma.
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## ***English Groups (C+D+E)***

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### ***Share experiences of dealing with violence in constructive ways***

- Violence not always physical can be verbal, emotional
- Counselling – aim to cope with structures of injustice – e.g. reconciling husband with HIV positive and wife HIV negative
- perpetrator plus victim equal one reality
- Confront directly rather than talking about others
- Acknowledge violence as violence
- In religious mindset – suffer and avoid conflict
- To take a position – let the oppressor know who you are and what you stand for
- Courage to cope with tension, face your counterpart do not run away but face the situation
- The dialogue process might not change the situation or person but it can heal the emotions
- Religious communities are “special branches”, potential for conflict in them – but there are many supports – need to use our resources, e.g. faith
- Look on conflict resolution in a holistic way
- Move out into new frameworks, like Jesus
- Church relationship with e.g. Gays – can be abusive in language
- Negotiation is a constructive tool – dialogue, listening
- Find the truth, facts, not hearsay
- Pool resources, energy, time, skills
- The conflict might hide the real needs
- The actual conflict can't do anything except accompany them – need space and time
- Expressing feelings, education to deal with emotions
- Process of reconciliation growth in self-understanding
- Look at the whole system not just the particular issue
- Sometimes reconciliation seems to be impossible – how can we help people cope in these ongoing situations? And in ongoing unsafe situations
- In violent situations – should you stay or should you leave?
- Helpfulness of someone believing the victim's story
- Recovery time varies – can take whatever time is necessary

# ***English Groups (C+D+E)***

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## **A. Formation**

1. New aspects needed for potential violence
  - For non-violence
  - For those *coming from* violent situations
  - For those *going to* violent situations
  - Holistic-psychology spiritual, to cope with fear, anger, etc.
  - Good self-knowledge, healthy self-care > to know who they are (missionaries of Christ)
  - ability to discern, be realistic
  - Conflict resolution Skills, processes of reconciliation. Meet experienced missionaries, to share experiences, attitudes, different stances in these situations
  - Short exposure to violent situations during formation
  - Collaboration with other groups
  - Missiology of risk* rather than of control
  - Volunteers rather than “under obedience” to these violent situations.
  
2. What kind of violence? – War, community conflict, domestic violence ...
  - Teach awareness of difficult forms of violence.
  - Recognize that conflict is a part of life.
  - Need for personal healing before going into areas of conflict.
  - Review curriculum of formation:
  - Need specific skills for appropriate professional training tasks in the specific mission – so don't feel “de-skilled” – Who offer this training?
  - How to deal with sense of *powerlessness*
  - Need spirituality for this*
  - Understanding – interpreting cultural + personal reactions to trauma, and taboos, grief, etc...
  - Cultural values are not absolute, not all are healthy.
  - Stories of experienced people are important for formation.
  - Communication skills essential
  - Appreciate the values to be learned from a new culture
  - How do we fit all this into a formation programme?
  - Use collaborative formation programmes*
  - Do we have the determination to make it happen?
  - Psychological and physical health must be checked
  - At what point are missionaries sent? Not immediately, after novitiate.*

Decision makers in the Congregations should have the actual experience of these situations  
 Support “self-possession”, self-knowledge.  
 Can SEDOS help in training? Inter-congregational cooperation use experienced missionaries  
 in this training  
 Formation must teach people to keep a “professional distance”  
 Missionaries need a “survival kit” to cope in traumatic situations  
 Don’t send individuals, send teams with a balance of skills

### **B. Encouraged to take breaks (even God took 7<sup>th</sup> day break!)**

Call together for meetings, systematic  
 - Visiting programme  
 Need to be listened to and believed, need a friend  
 Regular health check up  
 - Opportunity to communicate on telephone  
 - Means of relaxation, rest, diet, two ways benefit  
 Regular retreats, no excuses!  
 Spiritual mentoring, mutual counselling  
 - Quality of presence can only be achieved by retreat, time out – against over-work, a feeling  
 of being indispensable  
 Need to read signs of a developed conflict  
 Need to dialogue with locals in conflict  
 Senders need good information in the situation (use local organization on the ground)  
 Provide replacements to enable holidays  
 During breaks – offer a range of on-going formation and renewal  
 Give freedom to explore options to return or not – senders to discern should the person be  
 sent back or not?  
 Skilled persons going to area for input or safe place near the country for breaks and processes  
 Welcoming community needs to give missionaries time and space to tell their stories, etc.  
 Whole congregation needs education to be aware of the conflict situations – helps to support  
 them, reach out in support  
 Visiting from leaders, friends, others, give chances for short breaks, beach, etc...  
 Find ways to ensure that missionaries can collaborate with other congregations  
 Good local leaders essential – to prevent problems e.g. burn out  
 Individuals encouraged to identify their needs and be supported, in this, by Congregational  
 leaders  
 Prevention is cheaper than cure

### **C. Support for missionaries coming out**

Congregations should give time, space and sensitivity to returnees e.g. identifying with cultural  
 roots  
*Expatriates* can never become one of the people they serve and can’t identify with the country  
 of origin either – “ Expatriates phenomenon”  
 Different dynamic looking back on the experience, different need  
 Older missionaries returning to “retire” in country of origin requires sensitivity e.g.  
 experiment of providing a separate community house for them before moving into the  
 province

Change in one's values after a missionary experience > Stress

Make people feel "at home" returning home

Availability of professional trauma healing, specific skills help make links with outside world

Help people recognize what help they need

### **Question I FORMATION**

- 1) Review of formation curriculum
- 2) New mission context: a lot of violence — today, candidates coming from areas of violence
- 3) Holistic preparation: skills, good, self-knowledge, etc.
- 4) Missiology of risk, not control/spirituality of powerlessness
- 5) Collaborative formation programmes
  - When to send out young missionaries?
  - Do we have the determination to make all the above happen?

### **Question II WHAT SUPPORT FOR MISSIONARIES IN VIOLENT SITUATIONS?**

- 1) All kinds of BREAKS which include on-going formation, retreats, holidays, etc.
  - 2) Regular visits from leadership, friends, etc.
  - 3) Communication – information as support
  - 4) Balanced life-style
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## ***English Groups (A+B)***

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### ***How should we be preparing our missionaries for working in environments of violence?***

- As we receive more vocations from areas of violence, we need adequate formation techniques to address this
- Many new members have been involved in or affected by violent situations themselves.
  - o How do we help them to integrate this?
  - o How do we help them to tell their stories?
    - § If we don't understand the context of people's lives we will use old models that are obsolete
    - § The challenge is not to get stuck in the story, then rooted in a particular context, but to move beyond it
- Do we read into people's wound our paradigm of what it means to be wounded and our ways of manifesting this?
- Create centres that specialize with the spirituality of peace-building and reconciliation.
- Prepare missionaries for self-defence, e.g. Karate
- How do people in formation learn the balance of being relevant in violent situations without taking on themselves the stress and pressures of violence?
- Learn coping mechanisms: use of free time
- Compile a directory of places or centres where we can send our formation people for peace studies. Perhaps SEDOS can publish such a list
- If the focus in formation is on the mission, it can change the questions from the personal to the global. The topic of reconciliation might be an easier way to bring the social and human development model together in formation. Justice, mercy and compassion have a theme of mutuality
- It is sometimes difficult to tell your story outside your own culture
- Use missionaries who have returned from the field as formators
- Part of formation should be learning the culture and language of the people and the spirituality of peace-building
- Role of lay missionaries – they also need proper formation for peace-building and reconciliation

### **Support for missionaries living in environments of violence**

- Create caring leadership to bring support and understanding
  - o Be aware of personnel who need to be removed from a situation because they are making it worse
  - o Be courageous enough to give a break to missionaries to recall them from a stressful situation to recoup. Money should not be the concern here
  - o Local leadership must keep general leadership fully informed about situations.
- When violence is low intensity, it is hard to know about and respond to it. Secondary trauma is hard to assess when it is happening
- Community life and support groups are very important
  - o The quality of life in community is vital
  - o Attention should be paid to means of communication on all levels
  - o Bring special treats
  - o Plan visits by other members
  - o Encourage healthy relationships with peers and NGOs

Pro-active plans are important in violent or potentially violent situations

- o An outside person might be needed to determine if missionaries should be removed from an area where their presence might cause danger to others
- o Always a question: Are you helping people by staying on or hindering them?
- o How do we prepare missionaries with regard to being identified with one particular side in a conflict and therefore, not building bridges. Being dispassionate is a skill

Keep the rest of the Congregation informed about what is going on in the conflict zone

### **What help and support can we offer our missionaries coming out of environments of violence?**

- Recognize that post trauma exists
  - Develop a plan for debriefing
  - Legitimise nice things that they need to do for themselves
  - Change the perspective of the martyr syndrome where it is permissible to have high blood pressure but not trauma
  - Accompany the missionaries on holidays and renewal programmes
  - Have a welcome celebration when they return home
  - Prepare them to be missionaries in a different situation
  - Join with other congregations to bring together missionaries from the same countries to form their own support groups and listen to each other's accounts
  - Realize that some personnel have been removed from their mission region on the basis of local controversy and they may not have had due process to tell their side of the story
- Re-entry can be painful
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**- *French Groups* -**

# Groupes Francophones (A+B)

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**19-05-2004**

A partir d'un très riche partage sur nos expériences personnelles, nous sommes arrivés à dire que :

La *communication* est un *miracle* vu nos différences de mentalités, d'origines, d'ethnies, de langues, de conditions sociales, etc... Tout cela fait que les conflits sont latents sinon inévitables.

Ils sont décuplés par un environnement de guerre (Rwanda ...) et les idéologies rendent les conflits plus durs et irréversibles. Après avoir longuement partagé nos expériences de conflits et de réconciliation, nous sommes d'accord pour affirmer quelques convictions :

## **I. Stratégies de prévention :**

Pour dépasser les conflits, il y a *tout un travail à faire* dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la formation :

- *Education* dès le plus jeune âge : dès le jardin d'enfants, on voit des exemples de conflits et de réconciliations. L'école peut jouer un grand rôle dans l'apprentissage du pardon et de la réconciliation. L'Église a *tant d'écoles* catholiques de par le monde. Elles ont un rôle à jouer dans l'éducation pour la paix. Elles peuvent faire mieux peut-être ? Tâchons d'introduire dans les *programmes l'éducation* à la non-violence, à la différence.

- Appliquons cela aussi à notre vie religieuse dans le domaine de la *formation* : pour de nombreux candidats aujourd'hui, il y a nécessité de faire tout un *travail de guérison*. Il nous faut aussi faire un sérieux discernement des vocations surtout si les jeunes viennent de pays en guerre. Dans ces cas, il faut une formation spécifique : Là aussi, c'est à introduire dans les *programmes* de formation.

- Dans notre *formation permanente* : attention aux médias. Veiller à une information diversifiée, aller au-delà des rumeurs et des propagandes cachées dans les informations officielles. L'ignorance est cause de racisme.

## **II. A propos du processus de réconciliation lui-même :**

- Nous reconnaissons *l'importance du temps et d'un espace sûr*, donc de la distance à prendre, tout cela pour laisser à la personne la possibilité d'exprimer son vécu douloureux et d'être *écoutée*. Cela prend du *temps*.

- *Autres facteurs qui aident la réconciliation* :

- o Une médiation, une tierce personne
- o Le dialogue de personne à personne
- o Savoir faire le deuil
- o La guérison de la mémoire

- o Notons qu'une parole religieuse est parfois malvenue car «les yeux qui ont pleuré voient autrement le monde»
- o La reconnaissance de la faute
- o La demande de pardon ... mais le pardon, c'est divin. C'est un don de Dieu. La *Foi* nous aide à le recevoir : La prière aussi.

- Pour *sceller* la réconciliation, il y a des gestes qui aident. Des gestes symboliques. Quand cela vient de personnes officielles, cela a plus de retentissement (de Gaulle et Adenauer, Paul VI et Athenagoras, Mandela et de Clerck)

- Il y a des conséquences à une réconciliation . Elle est *contagieuse*. En effet, il y a une «spirale de la réconciliation» : une réconciliation en entraîne une autre.

- Enfin, les conflits font beaucoup de bruit mais les réconciliations en font moins . «Un arbre qui tombe fait plus de bruit que toute une forêt qui pousse» (Cardinal François Marty)

### III. Appliquons cela à nos communautés

- Les conflits sont inévitables mais beaucoup de petits conflits *peuvent être évités*. C'est important car ils mangent nos énergies.

- Nous voulons *discerner* les *graines* de racisme, les préjugés qui existent en nous et apprendre à gérer les conflits

- Faire *l'option d'un style de vie non violent*, utiliser ou trouver de nouveaux moyens favorisant le dialogue et la réconciliation dans nos communautés :

- o Révision de vie
- o Partage de la Parole en Communauté
- o Célébrations pénitentielles
- o Favoriser le dialogue interpersonnel
- o Reconnaître et accepter nos différences

Car, appartenant au Christ, nous sommes appelés à briser des murs et à bâtir des ponts.

### Questions :

1) A propos du *temps* :

- Des gens en conflit n'ont pas toujours le même rythme : l'un est prêt à se réconcilier l'autre pas. Comment gérer cela ?

- C'est bien de laisser du temps à la réconciliation mais il y a des situations urgentes, par exemple en cas de scandale, de contre-témoignage flagrant : Comment accélérer le processus de réconciliation ?

2) Y a-t-il un processus pour guérir la mémoire ?

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# **Groupes Francophones (A+B)**

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**20-05-2004**

## ***Se situer positivement dans des situations de violence***

Des expériences échangées dans nos deux groupes nous retenons les points suivants :

### **1. Eviter l'escalade de la violence**

Il s'agit d'arrêter les conflits au moments où ils naissent, ne pas réagir systématiquement, laisser passer le temps.

C'est ainsi que dans l'Est du Congo, quand il a été envahi, l'Église s'est organisée pour éviter par tous les moyens que les jeunes prennent les armes et créent une situation semblable à celle de l'Ouganda.

Les populations ont adopté une stratégie de non-violence : organisation de *sit-in*, d'opérations «villes mortes», chacun achète un sifflet pour alerter le quartier en cas d'agression. Différents réseaux parmi lesquels ceux des communautés de base aident à passer les mots d'ordres et à organiser la population.

Dans cette stratégie, la créativité et l'humour jouent une grande place. L'humour est toujours une arme contre les dictatures et la violence, cela s'est vu au temps des dictatures dans l'Europe de l'Est.

### **2. Dans les situations de conflit : libérer la parole**

Quand les victimes de la violence peuvent parler, elles se libèrent. Il arrive que, chez certains peuples, la culture réprime l'expression. Il ne faut pas manifester en public ses sentiments, il ne faut pas pleurer en public. En ce cas, une longue formation est nécessaire pour apprendre à oser parler, à oser dire ses blessures, afin de se guérir et de faire diminuer le capital de colère qui les habite.

### **3. Aller vers l'autre**

Une congrégation religieuse qui vit en pays musulman a décidé d'envoyer les jeunes en formation faire des stages dans les familles musulmanes. Cela change totalement la perspective. La vie en commun fait que l'on se connaît et que l'on s'apprécie mutuellement.

De la même manière, à Haïti il y a un rapprochement avec le Vaudou dans la pensée chrétienne et les gens se retrouvent mieux parce que leur héritage traditionnel est pris en compte.

#### **4. Agir ensemble pour répondre à des problèmes communs**

Quand il s'agit de nécessités immédiates, il n'y a plus de distinctions de catégories, d'appartenance ethnique, etc. Il s'agit d'agir ensemble. Les œuvres sociales ont aussi cette fonction d'être un témoignage de fraternité, une porte ouverte avec la population locale. La réponse au niveau de la vie est toujours meilleure qu'une réponse abstraite.

#### **5. Le travail auprès des femmes**

Les femmes s'entraident toujours ; elles sont confrontées aux nécessités immédiates de survie et savent se soutenir par-dessus les groupes et les tendances. Elles sont donc plus facilement facteurs de paix. La formation des femmes est toujours un enjeu important. Nous avons cité un exemple de création d'ateliers d'apprentissage pour des femmes en prison afin qu'elles puissent survivre quand elles sortent. Pour cela il a fallu gagner la confiance des responsables.

#### **6. Etre vigilant**

Il y a des occasions uniques qui permettent des prises de consciences et des changements d'attitude – par ex. une catastrophe naturelle, une épidémie où la solidarité peut s'exprimer – mais il faut être en éveil pour ne pas manquer de telles occasions.

#### **7. Dans les communautés**

Des tensions importantes sont parfois dues au *leadership* d'une communauté ; on remarque que l'on respire mieux quand il y a un changement de gouvernement. C'est important de bien choisir et de former les responsables.

Dans un cas de crise grave, on a constaté que la volonté de faire face au conflit, de l'affronter avec courage, y compris en le portant dans les divers échelons de l'autorité s'est finalement révélé payant et a porté du fruit par la suite.

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# Groupes Francophones (A+B)

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**21-05-2004**

## **1. COMMENT DEVRIONS-NOUS PREPARER NOS MISSIONNAIRES A TRAVAILLER DANS DES ENVIRONNEMENTS DE VIOLENCE ?**

A quel moment les préparer ? Dès le début de la vie religieuse.

Dès la *formation initiale*, cultiver la Foi en Jésus Christ et une vie spirituelle profonde.

Préparer à la Mission du Christ et non à tel ou tel ministère.

Accompagnement spirituel (pas seulement au noviciat mais pendant les premières années de vie en communauté). Aider à faire face à ses propres conflits ou violences, à gérer ses émotions, à vivre le pardon et la réconciliation.

Vie communautaire solide : se rassembler autour de la Parole de Dieu.

Apprendre à prendre soin de soi-même, avoir des détenteurs.

Apprendre à lire et critiquer les médias.

*Formation immédiate au moment de l'envoi* : préparer les missionnaires par des sessions de formation, une information détaillée sur le pays et sa situation, éclairer sur les vraies causes de violence, apprendre à aimer le peuple auquel on est envoyé, former à la réconciliation.

De façon générale, savoir avertir que des conflits sont toujours possibles, et partout.

Veiller à une formation intégrale concernant tous les aspects de la personne.

Que ce soit un *oui libre* et personnel à cette mission difficile de la part de celui ou celle qui part.

Notons ici qu'il y a les congrégations missionnaires et les congrégations internationales, où l'on peut être envoyé en mission si on le demande.

Les responsables tiennent compte des types de personnalité dans l'envoi en mission, évitant d'envoyer des personnes plus fragiles dans des pays troublés. Aider à être conscient des risques à courir.

La violence ne vient pas seulement des personnes mais aussi de l'environnement : donner du temps pour l'étude de la langue quand un missionnaire arrive dans un pays afin qu'il puisse se passer de traducteurs.

Rôle des familles dans le support de la vocation missionnaire : il arrive que des familles refusent une obéissance ou mettent leurs conditions. Il est donc important qu'il y ait de bonnes relations entre les responsables de congrégation et les familles. Parfois, il y a une sorte de contrat, une lettre de demande de mission signée par le/la missionnaire avant son départ. Dans cette lettre, il/elle exprime clairement son acceptation des conséquences possibles. C'est à ce/cette missionnaire que revient le rôle de préparer sa famille à son départ et d'être clair(e) avec elle (pour éviter des poursuites en cas d'accident ou de décès).

## 2. QUELLE AIDE DEVRIONS-NOUS OFFRIR A NOS MISSIONNAIRES QUI VIVENT DANS DES ENVIRONNEMENTS VIOLENTS ?

*Sur place* : vie communautaire solide où la parole puisse être libérée  
Soutien entre les congrégations qui sont sur place.

Que les membres de la communauté prennent du temps pour respirer un autre air , pour trouver, créer des occasions de célébrer ensemble (Messe etc.) afin de briser ces cycles de violence qui les éprouvent.

Communication régulière et continue (si possible !) avec les responsables de la congrégation.

Aider et accompagner ceux et celles qui n'arrivent plus à supporter la situation mais ont la honte de quitter le pays, ayant le sentiment d'avoir échoué dans leur mission s'ils quittent.

En cas d'accueil de nouveaux missionnaires dans des communautés en situations de violence, prévoir un programme qui aide tous les membres à regarder l'avenir et pas seulement les épreuves passées.

*De la part des Supérieurs qui sont au loin :*

Si c'est possible, que les supérieurs visitent ces communautés régulièrement. C'est très important.

Support financier car pendant les troubles, l'autofinancement n'existe plus mais la vie continue et coûte plus cher !

Faire connaître la situation des missionnaires à l'extérieur du pays, faire pression éventuellement auprès des gouvernements

Garder le contact avec les familles de missionnaires isolés ou en danger.

## 3. QUELLE AIDE ET QUEL SUPPORT POUVONS-NOUS OFFRIR AUX MISSIONNAIRES QUI RENTRENT D'UN ENVIRONNEMENT DE VIOLENCE ?

Leur trouver la meilleure *communauté* d'accueil possible. Que celle-ci se prépare à les accueillir et soit capable de les écouter.

Dans certaines congrégations, il y a des *personnes formées* pour accueillir les missionnaires qui rentrent, dans leur pays, en vue de les aider à une intégration.

Dans le cas de violences subies, les crises peuvent être de différents ordres :

En cas de crises spirituelles, aider la personne à prier et re-prier sa vie. Qu'elle passe aussi du temps avec sa famille : ce sera comme un « pèlerinage aux sources », qui relie à son enfance.

Pour les hommes, il est nécessaire d'avoir une perspective de travail.

Pour les femmes, le besoin de se réintégrer est essentiel.

Rôle des *Supérieurs* : longue écoute, savoir dire : « on te comprend, tu es pardonné » (paroles de libération en cas d'erreurs faites).

Donner le choix à la personne pour qu'elle exprime ce qu'elle voudrait faire, ce dont elle a besoin  
Offrir une période de renouveau – celle-ci serait en fait nécessaire pour *tout(e)* religieux(se).

Nous posons deux questions :

- Est-ce que les missionnaires se préparent à quitter un jour leur travail ? Ne pas continuer jusqu'à ce qu'on n'en puisse plus !

- Les missionnaires des pays du Tiers Monde quittent parfois un pays de violence où ils/elles sont en mission pour revenir dans leur propre pays, lui aussi en proie à la violence. Comment les préparer ? Veille-t-on à leur donner aussi un moment de répit et de repos ailleurs ?

**- *Spanish Groups* -**

# ***Reporte del trabajo en pequeño grupo***

## ***Compartir y analizar experiencias***

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***Día 1***

***miércoles, 19 de mayo de 2004***

Desde el primer momento del trabajo, se creó en el grupo un clima de confianza, cercanía y flexibilidad, de tal manera que permitió a cada uno de los miembros compartir con toda espontaneidad, apertura y profundidad muchas experiencias personales y de trabajo en torno a las situaciones de violencia e injusticia vividas en sus diferentes realidades.

Durante esta primera jornada, el grupo compartió ampliamente diferentes experiencias relacionadas con el tema del Perdón y la Reconciliación en situaciones de violencia y opresión en diferentes contextos: Interétnicos, Conflictos políticos y religiosos, Grupos guerrilleros, problemas al interior de las Congregaciones Religiosas y del Sacerdocio. Además se compartieron experiencias de trabajo en escuelas de perdón y reconciliación.

En un principio se pensó que el tiempo asignado para el trabajo en grupos era demasiado largo, pero a medida que se fue profundizando en el compartir, surgieron interesantes comentarios y análisis en relación con las experiencias compartidas y el tiempo fue suficiente.

La presencia de personas proveniente de diferentes países: México - Colombia - España y pertenecientes a diferentes congregaciones masculinas y femeninas: Ursulinas, Buen Pastor, Sagrada Familia de Burdeos, Hermanas Blancas de África, Padres de la Consolata y Javerianos de Parma, con ricas experiencias de trabajo en zonas de conflicto, contribuyó a tener una visión amplia de experiencias que iluminan los caminos para un mejor trabajo en pro del perdón y la reconciliación.

El compartir con el segundo grupo, permitió una visión más amplia de la realidad que se experimenta en la vida religiosa en torno al perdón y la reconciliación, llegándose a una toma de conciencia de la necesidad y urgencia de continuar trabajando esta temática en la iglesia y Congregaciones religiosas, a nivel de la formación inicial y permanente y en general en todos los campos del trabajo apostólico.

Se percibió en todos los integrantes del grupo grande interés y preocupación por el tema tratado en el encuentro y plena integración en el proceso de trabajo llevado en el mismo.

En el compartir y análisis de las experiencias y reflexiones compartidas, se mencionaron entre otros los siguientes puntos:

- o En el manejo y conciliación de conflictos, se requiere un análisis no solo de las causas objetivas, sino también y muy importante trabajar las causas subjetivas: rabia, rencor, resentimiento, celos, miedos, etc.

- o La experiencia de rabia y resentimiento acumulado en una persona, la invade totalmente y se hace un grande mal a sí misma, con serias repercusiones somáticas. Cuando esta rabia se hace colectiva, se torna peligrosa y hace un mal devastador en la sociedad.

- o Todas las personas están marcadas por historias de dolor grande o pequeñas que abran heridas por lo cual se requiere en todos los ambientes, favorecer momentos de encuentro personal y ayuda de otras personas para tocar y limpiar dichas heridas.

- o En la educación, ha predominado la línea de justicia (cultura romana) y la razón (Grecia) o sea el manejo de conceptos a nivel intelectual, lo cual ha condicionado profundamente la formación en la iglesia y en la vida religiosa, de ahí la carencia de formación para una adecuada vivencia y manejo de las emociones. Se carece de espacios y entrenamiento para la lectura de sentimientos personales.

- o La esencia de ser discípulo es ser reconciliador. Debemos ser agentes y puentes de perdón, reconciliación y comunión partiendo de nosotros mismos. Esta es la grande y principal señal del Reino. Hoy se requiere un trabajo diferente en el campo de la formación. La vida religiosa tiene que pensar en cambios sustanciales, con otros paradigmas, desde una visión de amor, ternura, misericordia. Formar la inteligencia emocional.

- o Una realidad que se constata: no tenemos ni conocemos una pedagogía de reconciliación. Hay una gran pobreza teórica y de experiencias en la temática del perdón, la reconciliación y comunión. Nos faltan las herramientas necesarias para un trabajo serio y profundo en este campo. Se requiere urgentemente la profundización en este tema diseñando laboratorios específicos para procesos de perdón personal, interpersonal y en la misión.

- o Hay que tener presente que estos procesos son dolorosos, no sabemos a donde llegarán, son lentos y requieren de paciencia para una adecuada reconstrucción de las relaciones. Que el trabajo del perdón es la parte esencial en un proceso de reconciliación. Puede haber perdón sin reconciliación, pero nunca reconciliación sin perdón. La reconciliación implica pactos en los diferentes niveles de coexistencia, convivencia y comunión.

- o La reconciliación generalmente inicia por parte de las víctimas de violencia. Es un misterio de respuesta a la acción de Dios en cada persona.

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## ***Compartir y analizar caminos constructivos frente a las situaciones de violencia***

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***Día 2  
jueves, 20 de mayo de 2004***

Se continuó el trabajo en un clima de especial integración apertura, alegría y espontaneidad. El grupo se centró rápidamente en el tema de trabajo asignado para el momento, haciendo énfasis sobre todo en los elementos que ayudan a la solución de problemas personales e interpersonales, especialmente al interior de las comunidades religiosas.

De forma clara y ágil se compartieron varios aspectos que ayudan positivamente al trabajo en pro del perdón y la reconciliación, así:

- Reconocer los recursos de la persona y hacer emerger sus capacidades para afrontar el conflicto, tomando conciencia de la realidad.
- Unir la ayuda profesional con el aspecto religioso e integrar fuerzas de trabajo para superar las dificultades personales y de grupos.
- Un trabajo de resignificación de la familia en las tareas apostólicas.
- Dar especial apoyo comunitario y terapéutico a las personas que trabajan en zonas de conflicto.
- Atender tanto a la persona agredida como también al agresor/a.
- Mantener un diálogo abierto con las personas que viven situaciones límite y trabajar por la humanización de los problemas unido a lo espiritual.
- El mediador de conflictos debe escuchar ambas partes y suscitar un diálogo creativo.

Estos puntos se complementaron en la reunión con el grupo A, donde se compartió además sobre la importancia de tener referencias de centros de apoyo y formación en la recuperación de las fuerzas vitales, para la solución de conflictos, mencionándose al respecto algunos existentes en Canadá, Roma y Guatemala.

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## ***Cómo preparar a nuestros misioneros para trabajar en ambientes de violencia. Cómo ayudar a quienes trabajan ahora y a quienes regresan de dichos ambientes***

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***Día 3  
viernes, 21 de mayo de 2004***

El trabajo de grupo en este tercer día se realizó con especial interés y profundidad, siendo conscientes de la importancia que tiene el aporte del grupo para el trabajo de nuestros Hermanos y Hermanas en ambientes de violencia.

Después de compartir con los integrantes del grupo Sp. A, se integraron los puntos tratados, así:

### **1. Preparación para misioneros que van a trabajar en lugares de conflicto:**

- Antes de enviar a las personas a mision, asegurarse que son personas equilibradas en todos los niveles.
- Darles información teórica sobre la situación del país y sobre la nueva visión de evangelización.
- Ponerlas en contacto con instituciones civiles y eclesísticas del lugar que previamente tengan experiencias con emigrantes, desplazados, etc y acompañales en estas experiencias.
- Prepararlas para vivir la interculturalidad, dándose espacios para conocerse y celebrar las diferencias.
- Darles herramientas para resolución-transformación de conflictos.
- Capacitarles frente a dos peligros: la compenetración y encarnación de los problemas o la insensibilidad frente al dolor y el conflicto. Ambas situaciones entorpecen un trabajo productivo.
- Preparar para enfrentar situaciones extremas.
- Preparar para dejar estos trabajos antes de que la persona se afecte física o emocionalmente.
- Cultivar especialmente la vida espiritual, de oración con la principal fuerza
- Replantearse a nivel congregacional los elementos esenciales de la formación inicial y permanente priorizando la formación para la reconciliación y el perdón, la inteligencia emocional y crear espacios comunitarios para compartir profundamente la oración y vida
- La etapa del prenoviciado sería el lugar más adecuado para el trabajo de la historia personal y superación de traumas generados por las diferentes situaciones de violencia.

**2. Apoyos en el lugar de misión:**

- Acompañar muy de cerca tanto a las comunidades como a las hermanas/os en forma individual, escuchando y ayudando a expresar ampliamente sus sentimientos.
- Trabajar por una convivencia en armonía, integración y comprensión mutua al interior del grupo comunitario
- Que tengan salidas periódicas del lugar para esparcimiento y refuerzo espiritual.
- Establecer momentos y espacios especiales de encuentros comunitarios
- Participación en encuentros zonales del lugar.
- Visitas periódicas por parte de las/los responsables de la Congregación para compartir ampliamente con las Hermanas.
- Mantenerles informados de lo que se dice en otros países sobre la realidad en que viven.
- Estar cercanos a los familiares de las Hermanas/os, en los casos en que se pueda.
- Que los misioneros, misioneras se sientan libres de marcharse o quedarse en la misión, lo mismo que lo han hecho al ir a la misión.
- La unión entre las diferentes congregaciones es muy importante para acompañarse en los diferentes trabajos.

**3. Ayudas al regreso de la misión:**

- Escuchar ampliamente las experiencias de las Hermanas/ os, largamente, sin minimizarlas.
  - Comprensión, acogida, apoyo respetando el ritmo de cada persona
  - Ayudar a caminar y a analizar si hay consecuencias negativas que estén afectando la salud física y emocional y si es del caso con especialistas.
  - Facilitar la participación en cursos especiales que ayuden a manejar las consecuencias negativas que puedan existir (En Roma Mid Life), para reintegrarse.
  - Es conveniente tener comunidades especiales para acoger a los Hermanos y Hermanas que regresan de la misión.
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## ***Experiencias en Situacion de Conflicto y Elementos Comunes***

### **Vimos que habia experiencias de violencia en diferentes contextos:**

- . Violencia inter-étnica
- . Guerrilla
- . Conflictos internos en las Congregaciones Internacionales.

### **Encotramos como elementos comunes en las experiencias compartidas:**

- . La Reconciliacion como signo actual del Reino: Es un compromiso irrenunciable.
- . Consideramos la Reconciliacion como una asignatura pendiente.
- . Constatamos que no sabemos resolver conflictos.
- . Hemos visto la importancia de formar a la Reconciliacion tanto en la Formacion Inicial como en la Continua.
- . Tenemos que intentar resolver los conflictos acumulados en la historia de las Congregaciones y de las personas.

### **Comentarios:**

#### **La Reconciliacion:**

- . Es un proceso doloroso y lento.
- . Empieza a nivel personal.
- . Requiere tomar en cuenta el odio y rabia que estan por debajo de las causas externas.
- . Requiere una experiencia de Fe y un ambiente de confianza.
- . Implica un paso previo que es el Perdon.
- . El perdon procede mas del corazon que de la razon.
- . Implica pactos y acompanamiento.

### **Propuestas:**

- . Que SEDOS promueva la continuidad de este tema.
- . Que SEDOS apoye laboratorios de perdon.
- . Que el *Congreso de Vida Consagrada 2004* incluya en su programa el tema de la Reconciliacion.

## ***2° Resumen***

### **Partiendo de nuestras experiencias vemos:**

- Importancia de la escucha. Una escucha que da confianza y credibilidad.
  - Necesidad de un dialogo que integre todos los aspectos del conflicto, sin que se convierta en dialéctica, para llegar a una toma de conciencia objetiva de lo sucedido. Ayudar a una expresión franca, sincera, para llegar a ver la realidad y asumir un compromiso
  - Que los pequeños pasos que se van dando se celebren como momentos de impulso.
  - Cuando sea necesaria una ayuda terapéutica o profesional, tener en cuenta que no se separe el aspecto psicológico del espiritual para que sea integrador de toda la persona.
  - Ayudar a reconocer y utilizar los propios recursos: cultura, educación, historia familiar, Fe, comunidad religiosa.
  - Apoyar el trabajo de los mediadores en los conflictos para ayudarles en su acompañamiento y en la evaluación. La comunidad tiene ahí un papel importante.
  - En las situaciones de violencia tener en cuenta tanto al agredido como al agresor. Ambos necesitan ayuda.
  - Existen metodologías y Centros de ayuda que pueden ser un recurso importante para llegar a la reconciliación y al descubrimiento de las fuerzas vitales de la persona.
  - Constatamos que sin darnos cuenta podemos hacer violencia por desconocimiento mutuo (diferentes culturas, temperamentos, mentalidades, etc.)
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### **1. Preparación para misioneros que van a trabajar en lugares de conflicto:**

- Antes de enviar a las personas a misión, asegurarse que son personas equilibradas en todos los niveles.
- Darles información teórica sobre la situación del país y sobre la nueva visión de evangelización.
- Ponerlas en contacto con instituciones civiles y eclesísticas del lugar que previamente tengan experiencias con emigrantes, desplazados, etc., y acompañales en estas experiencias.
- Prepararlas para vivir la interculturalidad, dándose espacios para conocerse y celebrar las diferencias.
- Darles herramientas para resolución-transformación de conflictos.
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- Preparar para enfrentar situaciones extremas.
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- La etapa del prenoviciado sería el lugar más adecuado para el trabajo de la historia personal y superación de traumas generados por las diferentes situaciones de violencia.

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- Que tengan salidas periódicas del lugar para esparcimiento y refuerzo espiritual.
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  - Ayudar a caminar y a analizar si hay consecuencias negativas que estén afectando la salud física y emocional y si es del caso con especialistas.
  - Facilitales la participación en cursos especiales que ayuden a manejar las consecuencias negativas que puedan existir (En Roma Mid Life), para reintegrarse
  - Es conveniente tener comunidades especiales para acoger a los Hermanos y Hermanas que regresan de la misión.
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## ***Trabajo de Grupo 22 de mayo***

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### **1. ¿CUÁLES SON LAS CUESTIONES MAS IMPORTANTES QUE QUEDAN POR ATENDER?**

En primer lugar, sentimos que es necesario repensar nuestra visión y experiencia de la misionología desde una perspectiva de “misión y reconciliación”. Por una parte, es importante replantearnos cómo combinar el concepto de reconciliación con el “celo” de nuestra entrega misionera o de nuestros diferentes estilos de hacer misión, los cuales frecuentemente se ven teñidos de fanatismo religioso (una clásica forma de hacer violencia). Por otra parte, vemos que todavía se da una *violencia financiera* que toma forma en el uso de medios poderosos e ilimitados en nuestro estilo de presencia y acción misionera y en la exclusión de la participación de la gente local.

Una segunda cuestión: atender, promover, dar premura al perdón y reconciliación al interior de nuestras comunidades. Constatamos que a veces se enquistan dificultades en las relaciones y en la comunicación y esto se vuelve fácilmente raíz de agresividad que se acumula, generando serios problemas tanto en el nivel personal como comunitario. Estas dificultades se dan no sólo en las comunidades interculturales, sino también en las que los miembros son de una misma cultura.

### **2. LAS FORMAS EN QUE SEDOS PUEDE AYUDAR**

- a) Sugerimos que SEDOS dé continuidad al tema tratado en este seminario, teniendo presente dicha temática en sus conferencias públicas, en su boletín y en la página web.
  - b) Igualmente, pensamos que puede ser el facilitador para organizar un taller sobre perdón y reconciliación.
  - c) SEDOS podría animar además la creación de un grupo de trabajo sobre reconciliación que se dedique al estudio, profundización, investigación y formulación de pedagogías de perdón y reconciliación.
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**- Italian Groups -**

# ***1ª Sintesi del lavoro dei gruppi di lingua italiana Sul tema della Riconciliazione***

***Mercoledì 19 maggio 2004***

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Attraverso lo scambio delle esperienze abbiamo intravisto anche noi la riconciliazione come un «cammino» che inizia e passa attraverso diverse tappe ... ha bisogno di spazi e di tempi, per cui non bisogna troppo presto mettere la parola «fine».

Se si vuole aiutare la riconciliazione occorre prepararsi, non basta il buon senso e il buon cuore. Di qui la necessità di individuare metodologia e strumenti idonei per essere seri mediatori di riconciliazione.

Le esperienze presentate dai partecipanti riguardavano sia l'esperienza personale di riconciliazione all'interno della propria congregazione e nei rapporti interpersonali, sia nell'esercizio della missione in luoghi di conflitto.

***Sono emersi da entrambi i gruppi gli elementi ritenuti essenziali per un cammino di riconciliazione. Ne citiamo alcuni:***

- L'importanza di una lettura obiettiva dei fatti al fine di dire, per quanto possibile, la verità, e l'importanza di «saper dire la verità»
- la necessità di creare spazi di fiducia
- l'importanza della conoscenza di sé, e di riconciliazione con la propria storia  
la capacità di rileggere l'avvenimento alla luce della fede, di nominare la propria sofferenza
- il bisogno di guarigione personale dalle proprie ferite, per poter aiutare la guarigione di altri
- l'assenza di pregiudizi
- un ascolto profondo
- il coniugare insieme le varie dimensioni: umana, spirituale, psicologica
- La capacità di «stare accanto»
- Attenzione all'ambiguità del linguaggio: vittima ed aggressore utilizzano le stesse parole, ma danno loro significati diversi

***Sono emerse alcune problematiche e questioni :***

- Come coniugare giustizia e perdono
  - la necessità, come chiesa missionaria, di assumere un ruolo profetico, di essere presenti in quegli organismi dove si dovrebbe oggettivare la verità, o dove si lavora sull'ingiustizia a livello decisionale; questo non senza lasciare il servizio alla base
  - inquietudine laddove ci si incontra con una chiesa istituzionale troppo legata al potere temporale
  - la speranza di uscire da questo incontro con alcuni strumenti in più e, se possibile, una «metodologia illuminata» per diventare mediatori, catalizzatori di riconciliazione.
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## ***2° Sintesi del lavoro dei gruppi in lingua Italiana - Approccio e reazioni davanti ai conflitti e alla violenza -***

***Giovedì 20 maggio 2004***

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L'esperienza dei due gruppi è complementare: nella riflessione, un gruppo ha privilegiato le reazioni ai conflitti e alle violenze nei luoghi di guerra e di conflitto, nell'altro ci si è maggiormente soffermati sui conflitti interpersonali e all'interno dell'Istituzione religiosa.

Una serie di elementi già discussi ieri sono tornati con sfumature diverse nella riflessione di oggi, e sono stati oggetto di un ulteriore approfondimento.

L'impegno per la risoluzione dei conflitti inizia con una prevenzione da farsi, fin da bambini, attraverso un'educazione alla pace e alla non violenza e tramite la promozione di incontri e di iniziative che riuniscano giovani di diverse religioni e culture.

Attenzione alla lettura della storia in modo obiettivo. Sovente i manuali dati in mano ai giovani non rispecchiano la verità dei fatti.

Altrettanto importante è la formazione del mediatore: anche questo tipo di formazione non si improvvisa, va fatta fin dall'inizio, e si inserisce nel quadro della formazione alla conoscenza di sé, alla gestione dei conflitti, delle proprie emozioni e dei propri sentimenti.

Ci sembra necessario sottolineare che alternativamente si può essere aggressori e vittime ... e che il mediatore può essere realmente tale se riesce a porsi in ascolto sia della vittima che dell'aggressore ...

Si avverte la necessità di conoscere i metodi di riconciliazione propri di ogni cultura per non fare, a nostra volta violenza, imponendo i nostri.

### **Il cammino di riconciliazione necessita di :**

Chiarezza nei rapporti, fermezza e flessibilità nello stesso tempo  
attenzione ai tempi, agli spazi e ai ritmi di ogni persona, soprattutto in culture diverse  
dialogo nella verità; conoscenza delle cause che hanno ingenerato violenza o conflitto  
tecniche e metodi di riconciliazione vanno adattati sia al temperamento della vittima che dell'aggressore, di fronte al conflitto non reagiamo tutti alla stessa maniera  
necessità di saper affrontare il conflitto senza fuggire, con una corretta gestione dei propri sentimenti  
capacità di farsi aiutare con un accompagnamento qualificato nelle difficoltà  
rimanere liberi interiormente rispetto al conflitto e alle persone in causa; non diventare di parte  
prepararsi all'incontro con l'altro  
superare la tentazione di rimanere bloccati sulle ferite provocate dal conflitto .... saper andare oltre  
mantenere viva la dimensione di fede, di preghiera e di misericordia ("unguento che lenisce")  
leggere la sofferenza in caso di violenza o di conflitto alla luce del mistero pasquale, sia quando si è mediatori nei confronti di terzi, sia quando la si vive in prima persona  
richiamo alla conversione

### **Domanda :**

Come mediatori di riconciliazione ci mettiamo soltanto e sempre dalla parte delle vittime?  
Che atteggiamento teniamo nei confronti degli aggressori?

## ***1. Come dobbiamo preparare i missionari che lavoreranno in luoghi di violenza?***

Abbiamo affrontato questa domanda tenendo presenti quattro aspetti diversi:

### **a. Esistenziale:**

- § Proponiamo che i seminari e i centri di formazione siano localizzati in zone tali da esporre i nostri candidati alle situazioni reali del Paese (inserzione);
- § I Progetti comunitari di vita siano studiati ed elaborati con creatività in maniera tale da introdurre efficacemente i giovani in questi nuovi orizzonti della missione odierna (riconciliazione, pace, convivenza, perdono);
- § Proponiamo di esporre i giovani, durante la loro formazione, ad esperienze significative in missione o meglio ancora a dei veri tirocini.

### **b. Accademico:**

- § Ci siano materie accademiche che aiutino i nostri giovani ad elaborare una spiritualità della non violenza, della riconciliazione e del perdono;
- § Ci siano inoltre aiuti accademici che suscitino nei giovani interesse per i grandi temi della missione oggi: giustizia, pace, povertà, violenza...;
- § Si offrano mezzi che aiutino a leggere le situazioni di violenza, volute e programmate, e a conoscere i grandi conflitti in atto.

### **c. Spirituale:**

- § Si affronti, nei nostri centri formativi, la spiritualità del martirio, della *kénosis*, viste come un bagaglio indispensabile per il missionario oggi, ovunque si trovi;
- § Il discernimento vocazionale affronti in maniera chiara la realtà della missione oggi, per non lasciare spazi ad illusioni o ambiguità.

### **d. Formativo:**

- § Si aiutino i giovani ad affrontare le diversità culturali che già si incontrano nelle comunità formative, in maniera positiva, così che si abituino ad affrontare eventuali conflitti (o *shock* culturali) nella futura vita missionaria;
- § Le esperienze pastorali, durante la formazione di base, siano significative e sempre accompagnate da persone di esperienza.

## ***2. Che sostegno dovremmo dare ai missionari che si trovano in situazioni di violenza?***

- a. Dare spazi sufficienti per un confronto reciproco delle loro esperienze. Permettere di parlarsi ampiamente sulla propria situazione di vita (incontri di sostegno vicendevole);
- b. Importante è il ruolo che la comunità locale svolge nei momenti di difficoltà o tensioni sociali;
- c. Aiutare i missionari ad essere flessibili di fronte a situazioni di ingiustizia o di violenza, accettando anche, qualora necessario, il male minore.



- d. Sostenerli spiritualmente offrendo momenti forti di discernimento spirituale e di preghiera, rafforzandoli nella spiritualità di una donazione gratuita e totale;
- e. Permettere e incoraggiare i missionari di allontanarsi momentaneamente dal luogo di conflitto, attraverso uno scambio di personale, per rasserenarsi, riposarsi e riprendere forza;
- f. Proporre alle Conferenze Episcopali, o ai Religiosi, di creare centri che introducano i missionari alla realtà sociale, politica, economica, culturale e religiosa del Paese.

### ***3. Quale aiuto e sostegno dovremmo offrire ai nostri missionari di ritorno da situazioni di violenza?***

- a. Incontri di gruppo per chiarirsi e per parlarsi sulla esperienza fatta. Siano accompagnati da esperti, anche con iniziative studiate a proposito;
- b. Dare la possibilità di avere un sostegno psicologico e spirituale individuale, in vista di una riconciliazione interiore;
- c. Un'attenzione particolare alla persona del missionario/a per individuare situazioni inconse di disagio e di conflitto personale, con il conseguente aiuto;
- d. Utilizzare i centri di aiuto e recupero già esistenti o costituirne dei nuovi, se necessario.

## ***Resoconto del gruppo italiano***

***Sabato 22 maggio 2004***

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### ***Argomenti su cui riflettere***

1. Conoscere, gestire e guarire i sentimenti di rabbia, odio e violenza personali, sia nella formazione che durante la vita in missione.
2. Approfondire i temi del perdono, del martirio e dell'espiazione vicaria nei cammini di formazione e di spiritualità.
3. Missione e riconciliazione: temi da unire e approfondire nei loro vari aspetti: etico, economico, salvaguardia del Creato, sociale e spirituale.

### ***Proposte al SEDOS***

1. Gli argomenti, sopra indicati, possono essere approfonditi nei gruppi di studio e proposti durante le conferenze che vengono tenute durante l'anno.
2. Gli Istituti inviino al SEDOS le esperienze di riconciliazione vissute o conosciute, perché possano essere diffuse tra i membri del SEDOS e tra i partecipanti alle Conferenze.

***Speaker's  
Report***

- **Leonel Narváez Gómez, IMC** -

## ***Sin reconciliación no hay futuro***

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*Quiero hoy, hacer memoria de Teresa, un milagro maravilloso de la irracionalidad del Perdón y de la reconciliación. A los 22 años, Teresa sufrió el enorme dolor de perder su único hijo de 3 años. Una noche, en una oscura calle de su pueblo, un desconocido que la pretendía y que ella de tajo rechazaba, le propino dos tiros de pistola a su pequeño hijo y lo mató. Antonio, el asesino, fue capturado y posteriormente, condenado a 18 años de cárcel. Después de un año de llorar desconsoladamente, Teresa quiso ir de incógnito a la cárcel con algunas amigas a conocer a quien le había matado a su hijo. Le atormentaba el deseo de saber quien era esa bestia que le había causado tan profunda pena. Aquel mismo día, Antonio les contó la triste historia de su vida. Había sido un niño violentado inicialmente por su mismo padre, dejado luego por su madre con los abuelos ancianos y finalmente abandonado a su suerte en las calles. La historia corta es que Teresa, se llenó d compasión por la historia trágica de Antonio, lo siguió visitando regularmente en la cárcel. Hoy en día, están casados y tienen tres hijos.*

*El Perdón y la reconciliación son posibles. Los humanos tienen la capacidad heroica de perdonar lo imperdonable. Es la imagen del Dios de misericordia que brota en cada célula del ser humano. Sin perdón y sin reconciliación no hay futuro, decía con razón Mandela.*

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### **Introducción**

En esta reflexión busco inicialmente resaltar los elementos básicos del Perdón y la reconciliación. Seguidamente, presentaré la propuesta de una metodología y finalmente compartiré la experiencia de las Escuelas de Perdón y Reconciliación – ESPERE- que se lleva actualmente en Colombia y Brasil. El nombre “*espere*” hace referencia a la necesidad de un mínimo ejercicio de espera ante el asalto constante e inesperado de la rabia y del cerebro primitivo, propio del carácter ardiente de los humanos.

El método ESPERE tuvo origen en la Universidad de Harvard con un grupo de expertos de las ciencias sociales con los cuales por casi dos años se trabajó conjuntamente, definiendo la metodología y los contenidos necesarios para popularizar la cultura del Perdón y de la reconciliación.

Tuve la fortuna de vivir 10 años, en la tribu Gabra del norte del Kenya y Etiopia, en donde la palabra *paz* es una idea arquetipo de acepciones profundas. *Nagayat (paz)* es la palabra que ha definido desde hace muchos siglos, todos los actos de su vida cotidiana. Paz es todo. Cada 7 años celebran el jubileo y cada 7 veces 7 (cada 50 años), celebran el Gran Jubileo. Una de las expresiones sobresalientes de esta fiesta, es la celebración del perdón y de la reconciliación. Ya en las culturas más antiguas existía la cultura de la reconciliación.

En la Universidad de Harvard, tuve la oportunidad de recibir clases de autores famosos en los temas de resolución de conflictos como Roger Fisher, William Ury, Ronald Heifetz y algunos otros. Posteriormente, trabajé de cerca con los líderes de los grupos guerrilleros de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) e incluso colaboré en las negociaciones de paz entre el Gobierno y la Guerrilla.

En todos estos ambientes llegué a conclusiones importantes: que las técnicas de resolución de conflictos, por buenas que sean, no bastan para resolver los conflictos; que sabemos muy poco sobre la teoría y menos sobre la práctica del Perdón y de la reconciliación; que las rabias, los odios y los deseos de venganza subyacen ocultos a los conflictos; que esas rabias no son solo individuales sino sobre todo colectivas, y que sin resolver esas rabias y deseos de venganza, todo proceso de resolución de conflictos está avocado a fallar.

Para enaltecer la guerra, Virgilio en su Eneida empezaba con aquel famoso verso “*arma virumque cano*” (*le canto a las armas y a los varones...*) pero para temperar la venganza, casi contemporáneamente, los dramaturgos griegos se preguntaban *cómo hacer para castigar un crimen sin cometer otro crimen?* Las fotos trágicas de Irak, España, Palestina, Colombia, son solo una expresión mínima de lo que puede causar la rabia y la venganza de los seres humanos.

En Colombia tenemos una violencia arrastrada por

más de 40 años. Contemporáneamente, decenas de conflictos en muchas otras partes del mundo siguen escalando violencia tras violencia. Será que los humanos tenemos solamente genes para la guerra? Será que una ceguera colectiva nos infectó a todos y nos ha forzado a entrenarnos constantemente para la guerra? Será que los humanos podemos cambiar el rumbo de una historia de violencia y de venganza constante?

### Desafío crucial

Hay un desafío crucial hoy en el mundo: cómo construir una cultura nueva que transforme la guerra y la violencia y propicie la sabiduría de la paz sobre la locura de la guerra? En la enorme placa de mármol a la entrada de las oficinas centrales de la UNESCO en París aparece una inscripción que dice: *es en el corazón de las personas en donde se origina la guerra y es por lo mismo en el corazón de las mismas personas en donde es necesario construir la paz.*

Paradójicamente los que debiéramos ser expertos en Perdón y reconciliación, los sacerdotes y religiosos, sabemos muy poco. En una reciente reseña bibliográfica sobre el tema del Perdón desde la época de San Agustín (siglo V) hasta nuestros días, se descubrió que existían millones de títulos sobre el Perdón con Dios, pero menos de 170 títulos que hablaban del Perdón con el otro o la otra. De verdad, el tema del Perdón y la reconciliación es un tema todavía en su infancia en las ciencias sociales y en las ciencias espirituales. Posee sin embargo una poderosa genética interna que es preciso recuperar con urgencia.

Por siglos, el tema del Perdón y de la reconciliación ha sido monopolio de los clérigos. De algún modo, y sin duda en forma inconsciente, tal monopolio se convirtió en una forma de poder erróneamente institucionalizada por la organización eclesiástica. Ello sin negar, claro está, el poder misterioso de transformación que tiene el sacramento de la confesión.

Este monopolio del perdón fue reforzado con los temas del pecado y del infierno. Así, por siglos, se ha reducido torpemente el tema de la justicia al mero castigo. La misericordia y la ternura de Dios pasó a un segundo lugar, prefiriéndose más bien la autoridad y la ley.

La justicia punitiva se convirtió en una forma sutil de institucionalización de la venganza. En esta ceguera colectiva en la que hemos caído, aceptamos el castigo y la eliminación o limitación del otro como algo normal, tal y cual como cuando la humanidad entera cegadamente aceptaba la esclavitud como un hecho normal en la sociedad de entonces. Urge, por lo mismo hacer el esfuerzo para sacar el Perdón y la reconciliación de las sacristías y de los confesionarios y llevarla al estrado de la vida diaria de las personas y de los grupos humanos.

### Un nudo gordiano... con solución

Hay un nudo gordiano que no acabamos de

solucionar: la pobreza causa violencia, pero también la violencia causa pobreza. Cuál de los dos tendremos que resolver primero? La tentación ordinaria es tratar de resolver primero la pobreza y eso está bien, siempre y cuando no olvidemos que así solamente estamos resolviendo la mitad del problema. Sin duda que en la discusión de las causas de violencia es necesario tener en cuenta los factores individuales, los factores domésticos, los factores sociales y económicos, pero igualmente es necesario tener en cuenta que a la raíz de todos esos factores hay un factor subyacente: la rabia, el rencor, el deseo de venganza. Las mismas técnicas para la solución de los conflictos — eficaces como lo son — caen en tal tentación de ignorar la solución de esos odios y deseos de venganza como condición previa para la paz sostenible.

En el caso de Colombia, ya hemos comprendido que no basta el acuerdo político entre las elites en conflicto para lograr la paz. La *paz política* queda muy frágil y fugaz sino logra transformar los odios y rencores que subyacen en las bases sociales, que son la fuente generadora de más y peores conflictos.

Es ya teoría aceptada que el capital social precede al capital económico. Parte fundamental del capital social es precisamente la cultura del Perdón y de la reconciliación. Por eso que no es exagerado decir que *un pobre con rabia es doblemente pobre.*

La violencia puede ser personal, interpersonal o colectiva y puede tener expresiones a nivel físico, sexual, psicológico y de carencia/desatención. Las cifras consolidadas de la violencia criminal en el mundo durante el año 2000, elaborados por la Organización Mundial de la Salud, trae cifras aterradoras: de un total de 1.659.000 muertes violentas, 520.000 fueron homicidios. Pero más trágico todavía, 810.000 fueron causadas por el suicidio. El conflicto bélico ha producido comparativamente mucho menos: 310.000 muertos. Como fácilmente se puede aceptar, son los países con más bajos ingresos los que poseen los niveles más altos de violencia. LA OMS concluye que el factor más paralizante del desarrollo y el desafío más grande a las ciencias sociales es la violencia y entre ellas la violencia societaria.

Una forma más sencilla de clasificar la violencia es identificándola como violencia organizada (guerrillas, narcotráfico) y violencia societaria, dentro de la cual aparece como una epidemia invisible la violencia intrafamiliar.

Para el caso de Colombia, y en general para Latino América, hay una tendencia errónea. Mientras que la *violencia organizada* en Colombia solamente produce el 18 por ciento de la criminalidad y se le gastan 95% por ciento de los recursos, *la violencia societaria* produce más del 80 por ciento de la criminalidad. Entre los jóvenes de Colombia, el 18% de ellos ha dado muerte a alguien, 60% de los jóvenes ha visto matar, el 68% ha visto cadáveres, 25% ha visto secuestrar, el 16% ha participado en secuestros y el 40% de los jóvenes

de 15 a 18 años están en grupos subversivos. La franja etárea de los 15 a los 35 años, son las franjas de población más victimizadas por la violencia. La violencia se está llevando lo mejor de nuestra sociedad: la juventud.

Las fuentes de la *violencia societaria* tiene ya orígenes bastante definidos: primero la violencia intrafamiliar, segunda la venganza o ajuste de cuentas, tercero, las riñas y discusiones, y finalmente, la intolerancia social.

Con frecuencia se cree que la causa central de la *violencia intrafamiliar* sea la pobreza o el alcoholismo. Para el caso de Bogotá, la causa principal son las *dificultades en la comunicación* (67%). Dentro de la vida religiosa tales indicadores coincidentalmente parecen ser los mismos: los religiosos manejamos todavía serias dificultades en el manejo de la comunicación.

Dentro de las tendencias más perversas del mundo actual, sobresale la tendencia a responderle a la violencia con más violencia. El caso del Presidente Bush en USA es un ejemplo sobresaliente. De hecho, el costo total de la lucha contra la violencia gira entre el 5% y el 25% del PIB en algunos países.

Como expresión contrapuesta a todo ello aparece el terrorismo. El terrorismo ha desarrollado su habilidad para inspirar el odio y cultivarlo a través de lo que los expertos llaman el *cognitive rehearsal* (entrenamiento cognitivo) o sea la capacidad de devolver el cassette continuamente, llenarse de rabia ante la ofensa recibida e ingeniar formas refinadas de venganza.

Se han logrado identificar tres de las causas más inmediatas de la violencia. **Primero:** *no sabemos controlar la rabia*. La rabia es de hecho, una de las emociones más primitivas que tenemos los humanos. Una palabra, un gesto o una acción de rabia puede tener repercusiones serias en la relación de personas o grupos humanos. **Segundo:** *no conocemos alternativas para resolver los conflictos* más que la acción violenta. Hemos aprendido que para resolver las diferencias el único camino es la violencia. Sacamos así lo peor de nosotros mismos. La cultura de la compasión, de la ternura, de la benevolencia es ciertamente escasa... incluso entre nosotros los religiosos. **Tercero:** *en lugar de mediadores nosotros tenemos aguzzadores*, es decir gente que ha acostumbrado a echarle leña al fuego. La falta de instancias de mediación en nuestras vidas y ambientes son cada vez más sentidas también porque vivimos en una cultura donde nosotros estamos mediados por un ideal guerrero de triunfo (el deporte es un buen ejemplo de ello) que, de algún modo, nos incita interiormente a la violencia.

Los mismos descubrimientos neurológicos recientes confirman que el ser humano, en este proceso de evolución, permanece todavía con buena parte de su cerebro primitivo que se expresa con frecuencia con conductas incontroladas. El *entramado psicológico* o el cableado interior humano aun propende a la violencia. Cómo lograr niveles más avanzados de crecimiento humano, es precisamente el esfuerzo que se hace a través del Perdón y la reconciliación.

Las estadísticas coinciden en afirmar que un alto porcentaje de los victimarios antes fueron víctimas. Cuando fueron víctimas, nadie les ayudó a elaborar sus rabias y sus odios. Buena parte de los adultos violentadores, fueron niños violentados. Por qué las víctimas se vuelven victimarios? Primero, porque las rabias y los odios se acumulan en el tiempo, no se esfuman. Segundo, porque las rabias y los rencores son tanto individuales como colectivos. Es el caso de las negritudes y los indígenas, quienes viven apabullados por rabias acumuladas del pasado. Tercero, porque las rabias y rencores paralizan seriamente la dinámica interna de las personas y de los grupos humanos.

Para entender mejor la profundidad de lo que hablamos me permito referirlos a los conceptos profundos de Anna Harendt en su famoso texto sobre la *Condición Humana*. Ella insiste en que hay dos impostores en la sociedad: el pasado que nos pesa (algo muy válido para el caso de las negritudes e indígenas) y el futuro que nos preocupa. Por eso el pasado es necesario redimirlo con el perdón y el futuro lo tenemos que asegurar con los pactos o sea a través de la reconciliación.

### Las Escuelas de Perdón y de Reconciliación – ESPERE

Quiero dedicarle algún espacio a la presentación de la metodología de las Escuelas del Perdón y de la reconciliación - ES.PE.RE - que desde hace 3 años venimos implementando exitosamente en Colombia.

Me parece esencial, antes que nada, que nosotros como religiosos asumamos en todo su rigor, aquella bienaventuranza de Jesús que nos invita a ser misericordiosos como Dios es misericordioso. El Papa Juan Pablo II decía recientemente que los religiosos y religiosas *manifiestan con su carisma peculiar, el rostro misericordioso de Dios y el corazón materno de la iglesia*. Cuando las personas nos ven a nosotros, nuestras actitudes les deben ayudar a ver al Dios del amor, de la bondad y de la ternura. Tal vez nada sea tan esencial al apostolado y a la misma evangelización como este concepto del amor infinito de Dios.

Reconociendo la discusión teórica que existe acerca del tema, es necesario distinguir la diferencia entre Perdón y reconciliación. El Perdón es un ejercicio que yo hago conmigo mismo. Es el ejercicio de sacarme el veneno de la rabia y del rencor que yo tiendo a reciclar por dentro y que tiene consecuencias negativas en todo mi ser. La reconciliación en cambio, es el camino hacia mi ofensor. Mientras el Perdón es ejercicio terapéutico, la reconciliación es un ejercicio social. Puede haber Perdón sin reconciliación pero no puede haber reconciliación sin Perdón. En algunos casos, la reconciliación no es posible o no es aconsejable. Sin embargo, el ejercicio del Perdón es en sí mismo, ya el 90% por ciento del camino hacia la reconciliación.

Hablar de Perdón y reconciliación exige un cambio de paradigmas: contra la irracionalidad de la violencia nosotros proponemos la irracionalidad del Perdón, contra la locura de la guerra, la sabiduría de la reconciliación. Pero no basta hablar del Perdón. El impacto y la transformación se logra solamente cuando las víctimas actúan el ejercicio en sus propias vidas. El Perdón no es un ejercicio racional solamente. El Perdón es un ejercicio de alta dimensión emocional, comportamental y espiritual.

El laboratorio de Perdón de la Universidad de Wisconsin en Madison, ha demostrado que para lograr perdonar, la persona, víctima de algo, necesita de 10 a 15 horas de trabajo muy específico sobre el tema. Esa persona debe nombrar su rabia y a su ofensor, debe re-estructurar la ofensa a través de la memoria, y debe volver a ganar poder sobre sus propias emociones. Es el ejercicio complejo y difícil de recuperar la armonía interior.

Las ESPERE son grupos de 10-15 personas, que se reúnen para transformar sus rabias, odios y deseos de venganza. Son grupos que se encuentran ordinariamente cada semana, en lugares informales, con unas reglas mínimas — sobre todo de completa confidencialidad — acordadas entre los participantes y firmadas por cada uno de ellos. Estos grupos son guiados por *animadores* o sea personas del mismo Barrio que se capacitan para tal fin. Estos *animadores* pueden ser niños, jóvenes, hombres o mujeres.

A estos grupos nunca se invita a los victimarios, pues nadie quiere sentirse señalado como victimario. Se invita siempre a las víctimas. Es allí donde las personas descubren que ellos no solamente son víctimas sino también victimarios. Guerrilleros, paramilitares, militares, delincuentes de todo tipo, encuentran con sorpresa que detrás de su rabia hay ofensas del pasado que se escalaron en odios. Esos odios, al igual que heridas sangrantes, es necesario tratar con urgencia para que no sigan afectando toda la vida de las personas.

Cuando persona que ha sido víctima o victimario de alguna ofensa, grande o pequeña, normalmente hiere los 3 pilares más importantes de la existencia humana: el significado de vida, la seguridad y la socialización. La gran tarea del *animador* de las ESPERE es colaborar a las personas para recuperar la integridad de esos tres pilares.

### La metodología

Es necesario insistir que el Perdón y la reconciliación no se logran solamente con motivaciones de tipo cognitivo o racional. Es necesario intervenir en cuatro dimensiones: en el pensar (dimensión cognitiva), en el sentir (la dimensión emocional), en el actuar (la dimensión comportamental) y en el trascender (la dimensión

espiritual). Lograr una adecuada dosis de estas 4 dimensiones es el éxito de todo el proceso de Perdón y reconciliación.

La psicología de los traumas habla de tres herramientas básicas para ayudar en este proceso. *Primero* es necesario garantizar *ambiente seguro*. Es el *holding environment* del grupo o *empatía*, elemento fundamental que facilita que las personas logren expresar su dolor. Se trata de un ambiente *contenedor*, que permite que el dolor no se desparrame y que ayuda a las personas a recomponer las partes divididas de su ser.

*Segundo*, es necesario ayudarle a las personas a *contar la historia* de lo que les sucedió. Contar y hacer memoria es un ejercicio de alto valor sanador. No sin razón, los católicos cuando celebramos la Eucaristía *hacemos memoria* todos los días de un crimen, pero mirándolo con ojos nuevos. La cruz y la muerte de Cristo, no obstante toda su crueldad, se convierten en actos poderosos de salvación.

Tercero, a través de este proceso, las víctimas gradualmente se resocializan y recobran la capacidad de relacionarse adecuadamente con los demás, incluso a futuro con sus propios ofensores.

El esquema general de las 10 etapas básicas del Perdón y de la reconciliación siguen la dinámica de concientización, decisión, y compromisos (pactos). La experiencia ha enseñado que el proceso de concientización es fundamental en este ejercicio. De hecho, entre más se logre aclarar en las personas, las significaciones que tienen acerca del Perdón y de la reconciliación, mayor impacto logran en sus vidas. Los 5 primeros módulos están dedicados al perdón y tienen los siguientes títulos: *de la oscuridad a la luz, decido perdonar, miro con otros ojos, comprendo a mi ofensor, establezco un puente*. Los 5 módulos restantes se refieren a la reconciliación y toca los siguientes temas: *construimos la verdad, promovemos la justicia, hacemos un pacto y celebramos la memoria y la reparación*.

Al iniciar los 10 módulos o etapas, las personas participantes escogen un *sujeto de perdón y reconciliación* que les servirá como entrenamiento concreto durante todo el curso. Los participantes entienden entonces que el Perdón y la reconciliación exige práctica y por lo mismo, esfuerzos muy concretos.

Durante todo el curso, de hecho, el Perdón es presentado como un *acto heroico* y como una de las expresiones más profundas de la *santidad* a la que estamos llamados todos los humanos. Creemos que sea esta una expresión privilegiada de aquel *sean perfectos como mi Padre del cielo es perfecto*.

El módulo que une al Perdón con la reconciliación es el módulo llamado "*establezco un puente*". Siendo que la reconciliación normalmente empieza por el lado de las víctimas, se invita entonces a la víctima a comenzar a construir el puente desde su orilla. La reconciliación, normalmente empieza por el lado de las víctimas porque son ellas, y solamente ellas, quienes



poseen el poder de desatar la ofensa. De un modo misterioso, el victimario queda dependiente de la víctima y solo gracias a un ejercicio liberador, que se convierte en don de la víctima, puede el victimario recobrar su libertad y su integridad. *Per-donares* entonces hacer *don para el otro*. Es para dar no para recibir.

El primer módulo de la reconciliación es *construimos verdad*. La verdad no es ni mi versión de los hechos ocurridos y tampoco la versión del otro. La verdad es la sumatoria de las dos versiones. Tener la capacidad para descubrir la verdad del otro es parte fundamental de la reconciliación. Por eso que en el ejercicio de la verdad, es necesario tener en cuenta 3 tipos de lógicas. Primero, la *lógica de los acontecimientos* (cómo ocurrieron las cosas?), segundo, la *lógica de los significados* (cuál mensaje quería enviar?) y finalmente la *lógica de la necesidad* (cómo salir de aquí?) Cuando las personas se quedan solamente en la lógica de los acontecimientos entonces se bloquea el proceso de la reconciliación. La reconciliación es una exigencia de la *lógica de la necesidad* de que la vida prosiga.

Dentro del ejercicio de construir verdad, la memoria juega un rol de primera importancia. Se hace necesario *hacer memoria*, precisamente para evitar el efecto distorsionador que tiene el olvido. Los cristianos *hacemos memoria* de un crimen (la crucifixión de Jesús) para mantener viva y fresca la verdad de ese evento salvífico. Recordar es una forma noble de agradecer y por eso la eucaristía se convierte en *acción de gracias* que transforma y permite a las personas ir más allá de la simple lógica de los acontecimientos. En un mundo de violencia se hace urgente recuperar esta *ética de la memoria* que en el fondo es la ética desde las víctimas. En la historia del mundo ha predominado la ética desde los victimarios y esa tendencia centenaria es necesario transformarla.

El segundo módulo de la reconciliación es *promovemos la justicia*. Aquí se busca de romper el modelo de la justicia punitiva para instaurar el modelo de la justicia restaurativa. Hacer justicia entonces, no es castigar al ofensor sino y sobre todo, es *recuperar al ofensor*. Se busca de imitar la justicia de Dios que *justifica* y aplica siempre la misericordia y la compasión: *como dista el oriente del occidente así de grande es la misericordia de Dios ... Su amor no tiene fin*.

Mencionábamos al inicio que los grandes dramaturgos griegos se preguntaban cómo hacer para castigar un crimen sin cometer otro crimen. De hecho, la cárcel, la cadena perpetua y peor aún, la pena de muerte, se han convertido en formas oficializadas de venganza. Con frecuencia, en la vida religiosa, caemos en el paradigma del hijo mayor de la parábola del Hijo Pródigo. Pide castigo para el hijo menor. El Hijo mayor sabía cumplir con todos sus deberes pero no sabía amar. Los religiosos sabemos cumplir rigurosamente con todos los deberes religiosos (rezar el oficio fielmente, el santo rosario, celebrar la Eucaristía ...) pero con frecuencia, no sabemos amar.

El tercer módulo es *elaboramos un pacto*. Uno de los elementos claves dentro de la espiritualidad testamentaria es la alianza, el pacto. Los pactos se convierten en la expresión más profunda de los nexos que unen a los humanos entre si y con Dios, que se hace testigo de esos acuerdos.

Los pactos tienen básicamente tres grados. El pacto más bajo es el *pacto de co-existencia*. Es el perro y el gato que conviven en la misma casa y deciden de respetarse y no ofenderse. Aquí estamos a nivel de simple *natura*.

Un pacto de grado más alto es el *pacto de convivencia*. Las personas elaboran ya un proyecto mínimo de vida para llevarlo a cabo conjuntamente. Aquí estamos a nivel de *cultura*.

El grado más alto es el pacto de *comunión o comunidad*. Aquí estamos en el nivel más refinado de *espiritualidad*

Con sobrada razón, se puede afirmar que ciertos estilos de vida religiosa en los conventos se queda a nivel de simple *co-existencia* expresada a través de relaciones frías e indiferentes. Son realidades que reclaman a gritos cambios radicales, en cuanto que se convierten en anti-testimonios del evangelio de Jesús.

El cuarto y el quinto módulo desarrollan los temas de la reparación y de la celebración de la memoria y vida nueva. Es verdad que en muchos casos será imposible reparar suficientemente ciertas atrocidades. Ni en Sud Africa, ni en Alemania, ni en Rwanda, ni en ningún lugar. Es por eso que es necesario trascender lo que es la reparación simplemente material para inventar formas de reparación simbólicas pero igualmente compensadoras.

Es igualmente importante comenzar a fortalecer la cultura de la *reparación vicaria*. Los participantes a las Escuelas de Perdón y reconciliación en algunos Barrios en Bogota han comenzado a establecer la práctica de *celebraciones de memoria y reparación* por medio de reuniones de la comunidad en donde le permiten a las víctimas de algún infortunio o violencia contar la historia, facilitar el reconocimiento de su dolor y recibir simbólicamente algún gesto de reparación por parte de una de la comunidad.

### **Características básicas de las ESPERE**

Cuáles son las características básicas de las Escuelas de Perdón y reconciliación? Primero, es importante subrayar que es básicamente un servicio para las víctimas. Segundo, el eje central de la propuesta es la capacitación de *animadores* que se convierten no solamente en multiplicadores de la cultura de Perdón y reconciliación sino y sobretodo que se hacen *mediadores* de los conflictos y violencias que se vive en las comunidades. En este sentido, se actúa una labor de *prevención* que tiene impactos intangibles pero importantes. Tercero, se trata de una *terapia de grupo* que a través de juego de roles, de aproximaciones sucesivas, se facilita la aplicación de la sabiduría de la gente sencilla que tiene

igual o mayor efecto que el tratamiento hecho por profesionales costosos, muchas veces inasequibles a las comunidades pobres.

Cuarto, se aplica una estrategia de multiplicación por *células*. Finalmente, es una propuesta no solamente de heroicidad sino también una propuesta de alta política y del más refinado trabajo social.

Dentro de las ESPERE se le da mucha importancia al rito, al símbolo, a la ceremonia. Se busca de recuperar positivamente toda aquella cultura acumulada en las cortes de justicia en donde se usan símbolos y ritos (el martillo, la peluca del juez, la toga, el ambiente sagrado) para darle solemnidad a este nuevo tipo de *justicia restaurativa* y a este poderoso paradigma de la compasión y de la ternura. Los gestos y ritos ayudan así a hacer visible, solemne y simbólica el acto heroico del Perdón y de la reconciliación pero sobretodo, ayudan a que las víctimas, con frecuencia agobiadas por el caos infligido por una violencia, recuperen el sentido de orden y armonía de las cosas.

Las Escuelas de Perdón y Reconciliación – ESPERE — se convierten así en espacios sagrados donde las personas recuperan y fortalecen lo más valioso de su humanidad y de su espiritualidad: la ternura, la bondad, la compasión. Es lo que nos hace parecer nos más a la Divinidad.

*Las ESPERE, se llevan a cabo actualmente en ciudades de Colombia y de Brasil con poblaciones de Barrio, con miembros de Congregaciones Religiosas, con estudiantes de Escuela, con grupos de desplazados, con grupos de subversivos reinsertados, con profesionales de las áreas sociales, con personal de las cárceles y últimamente con empresas.*

*Se adelanta además investigación sobre el papel de la rabia en los conflictos, sobre el criterio moral punitivo y sobre la justicia consuetudinaria. Se lleva un riguroso inventario sobre el tipo de agresiones, los grupos de edad, los efectos en la salud. Finalmente, se va perfeccionando poco a poco, una escala de medición del perdón y de la reconciliación.*

Para mayores informes, visitar:

www.fundacionparalareconciliacion.org  
o escribir a:  
leonel@fundacionparalareconciliacion.org

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### Footnotes

- Conferencia dictada en Roma, SEDOS Residential Seminar, Mayo de 2004. El autor, es sociólogo, M. Phil de la Universidad de Cambridge en Inglaterra y M.Th de la Universidad de Harvard en USA.
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***Listeners'  
Group Reports***

- *Michael Mc Cabe, SMA* -

## *Ambience and Process of the Seminar*

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I'll begin with a few comments on the ambience and process of the Seminar and about the significance of our liturgical celebrations and prayer moments. This was the first time that the Seminar was held in the *Salesianum*. With its beautiful and ample grounds, its superb accommodation and first class facilities, it was an ideal location – a truly safe space – for sharing our experiences and reflecting on them. The size of the building notwithstanding, I think that we began quite quickly to relax and feel at home in this congenial and welcoming place.

The process adopted for the Seminar – moving from a sharing of our personal experiences and stories, through reflection and discussion, on to the elaboration of strategies to deal with the issues raised – demanded and encouraged the active involvement of all the participants. As we shared our experiences, direct and indirect, of living and working in environments of violence, we became keenly aware of how profoundly we are all affected by the constantly escalating cycle of violence which is such a marked and alarming feature of the contexts in which we live and carry out our mission today. We live and work in a dangerous world and most of us have experienced or witnessed violence in several of its multiple forms and expressions, not only in the contexts to which we are sent as missionaries (*ad extra*) but even within our own communities (*ad intra*).

Guided by our facilitator, Brian Starcken, and in the light of his input and the powerful presentation of guest speaker, Leonel Gomez, we were invited to reflect on our experiences and the issues and questions they raised for us as missionary disciples of Christ. This led us on naturally to identify constructive ways in which we strive to counteract violence or break out of cycles of violence and embark on a process leading to forgiveness and reconciliation. The final stage of the process invited us to apply our reflections and analysis to our life and work and strive to envisage concrete strategies aimed at helping our candidates in initial formation and our members, not only to cope with situations of violence, but to be more effective witnesses and channels of forgiveness and reconciliation in their missionary commitments.

Our Liturgical celebrations and prayer moments were integral elements in the entire process of the Seminar. Situating and reviewing our shared experiences, reflections, discussions and proposed actions in the context of our faith in our Risen and Present Lord heightened our sense of not being alone in the journey toward reconciliation. We have a Friend who accompanies us on the journey, as he accompanies the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and it is his Peace we seek, and of which we are invited to be channels. If, at times, the obstacles in the pathway to peace seemed to overwhelm us, and the goal of reconciliation appeared more a distant dream than a realisable objective, our prayer reminded us that the Reign of God is greater than the beleaguered kingdom of our hearts, and that our hope is placed in Someone who has overcome all things, not in something to be won or lost.

**- Pierre-Paul Walraet, OSC -**

## ***Quelques observations et réflexions***

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Fréquemment, nous prenons part aux réunions, ateliers de travail, conférences, séminaires et autres sortes de réunions où nous écoutons une personne qui donne une conférence en lisant un texte préparé, suivi par une session de questions et réponses. Beaucoup aiment cette façon particulière de faire. Ils préfèrent une présence plus passive et ils n'attendent pas réellement une participation active dans les discussions.

### ***L'avantage d'un petit groupe de travail***

En préparation du séminaire résidentiel 2004, le groupe de planification de SEDOS a explicitement opté un processus différent. Un processus qui ressemblait ou similaire au séminaire SEDOS 2001 : une grande partie de l'apport venait à travers les participants. En effet, chaque jour consacrait un temps signifiant en petits groupes. La dynamique du premier travail en petits groupes et cela joint au langage était très positive, donnant de l'énergie et aidait. Cela aidait à travers le thème du séminaire : stratégies pour la réconciliation dans des circonstances de violence. Les contributions remarquables et la sagesse de Fr Brian Starcken, CSSp, Fr Leonel Narváez Gómez, IMC, et Michael McCabe, SMA, donnaient une lumière particulière dans l'apport au groupe. Des suggestions valables étaient faites. Elles requièrent un continu et une réflexion future pour être réalisées pour le bien de la mission.

### ***Croissance vers une unité fraternelle***

L'esprit de croissance de la fraternité et de l'unité dans les petits groupes était frappant. Par l'écoute d'une ou l'autre histoire concernant les expériences de conflits, violences et le chemin laborieux de travail et de partage de pardon et de réconciliation, les membres du groupe se rapprochaient avec respect vers un autre. Les mots des histoires avaient le pouvoir de nous connecter réellement à un autre, et cela à un niveau très personnel. En réalité, nous pratiquons une somme de vérités qui a une dimension cruciale dans le processus de réconciliation. L'esprit dans le groupe, être ensemble comme frères et sœurs religieux dans un climat de confiance, permettait aux membres individuels de raconter et de partager les expériences dans lesquelles ils étaient eux-mêmes enfermés et très influencés et engagés. Beaucoup partageaient des situations, récentes ou antérieures, très concrètes de violence. Certain avait fait un long processus de réconciliation avec des effets salutaires. L'expression d'histoires était une expérience salutaire grâce à la manière de procéder du séminaire.

### ***Désir profond pour un monde meilleur***

Dans la somme variée de rapports, on pouvait sentir le désir profond chez chacun de nous pour un Monde plus pacifié et réconcilié. Les endroits du monde où ont lieu la guerre et la violence sont des aires prêtes habituellement pour années marquées par la pauvreté et la misère. Les situations de guerre dans un pays ou une région donnent souvent des effets destructeurs collatéraux sur les relations dans et entre les familles et aussi parmi les membres de communautés religieuses et cela à cause d'accusations ou collaborations avec l'ennemi, accusations ou non ont à faire avec les relatives situations dangereuses... Souffrance à cause de la guerre augmente à cause de ces circonstances additionnelles. Cela sonne aussi simple mais c'est une stratégie énorme : ne pas répondre à la violence par la violence. Ne pas faire ce que les autres font, puisque cela conduit seulement à une

escalade des conflits. Comment transformer le rouleau de la violence en un rouleau de paix et réconciliation ? Nous avons entendu quelques grands exemples de « stratégies » créatives, saisissantes et constructives, parmi lesquelles à Bukavu (Kivu – Rép. Dém. Congo) pour « stopper » l'ennemi et pour montrer la « non-peur » (par exemple *ville morte*...). Des actions symboliques de non-violence peuvent être très puissantes et, en fait, devenir un obstacle pour ceux qui veulent continuer avec la guerre et la violence.

### ***Puissance des mots***

Les mots sont aussi puissants en rapport avec les conflits. D'un côté, les mots sont capables de raconter et de révéler la vérité ; d'un autre côté, les mots peuvent mentir. Pour le dire autrement : les mots ont le pouvoir de délivrer mais les mots peuvent tuer comme une arme ; ils peuvent être destructeurs comme une arme qui tue et qui détruit. Il y a une autre distinction à faire : distinction entre « les mots qui sont l'expression de la vérité » et « les mots qui sont juste une expression de rumeurs ». Les mots qui expriment des rumeurs circulent plus vite que les mots exprimant la vérité. Raconter la vérité dans le processus de réconciliation surmontent l'hostilité et la méfiance. Raconter la vérité est important pour une compréhension réelle de l'enjeu. Seulement les mots qui expriment la vérité ont un pouvoir réel et les mots constructifs dirigent le processus de réconciliation vers la direction droite. Bien sûr, raconter la vérité est très difficile. Car pour aller toucher à la vérité, on a besoin d'aller toucher aux niveaux les plus profonds de son être. Dans des situations de conflit, c'est très difficile de se mouvoir intérieurement vers les niveaux les plus profonds, donner les obstacles des émotions, de la crainte, de la haine, des traumatismes. Le processus de ce séminaire nous aidait beaucoup à aller toucher à quelques niveaux les plus profonds de notre être. Nous avons pratiqué plusieurs récits de vérité dont certains avaient plusieurs effets de guérison.

Dans une circonstance de violence, la communication avec le « monde extérieur » est très difficile. Bien sûr, c'est d'une importance cruciale de recueillir une information objective sur ce qui se passe. Pour que la communication se passe aussi, les missionnaires font très souvent de leur mieux et sont très créatifs, et courent des risques, pour aller chercher les nouvelles de ce qui se passe de fait « de l'autre côté de la rive » afin que le monde en sache. Le fait qu'ils soient capables de « partager » leurs problèmes, aide les missionnaires à sentir qu'ils ne sont plus seuls avec ces problèmes.

### ***Réconciliation dans nos communautés religieuses***

Une attention a été aussi donnée au besoin de réconciliation dans la vie de nos Congrégations et Ordres internationaux. Nos communautés sont défiées à pratiquer l'amour et la charité qui débordent les frontières de notre pays et de notre culture. Nos communautés sont appelées par les paraboles de pardon et de réconciliation. Nous sommes appelés à nous engager pleinement dans une croissance spirituelle qui transforme nos relations naturelles de « *coexistence* » et nos relations culturelles de « *convivialité* » en une relation spirituelle de « *communio* ». *Communio* comprise comme écrit dans les Actes des Apôtres (4:32-35): *l'anima una et cor unum* idée. *Communio* est le contexte optimal où nous pouvons être de bons intendants du don (charisme) de pardon et réconciliation. De plus, nos communautés religieuses pourraient opter explicitement pour un style de vie non-violent, où avec dialogue, le pardon et la réconciliation sont les clés. Pourquoi ne pas faire du « pardon et de la réconciliation » un thème principal dans un chapitre provincial ou général futur ?

J'ai entendu aussi des récits concernant la place de la restructuration dans les Ordres et les Congrégations : provinces qui se fondent dans certains endroits du monde. Les nouveaux statuts sont mis ensemble pour faire une unification structurelle possible. Cela n'est certainement pas suffisant d'avoir des statuts en ordre pour promouvoir une union spirituelle et fraternelle. De l'énergie devra être investie dans des voies pour promouvoir les relations fraternelles à l'intérieur de la nouvelle structure. L'expérience nous apprend que ce qui conduit vers plus d'unité crée parfois l'opposition : division, relations distribuées, dialogue rompu. Des sortes particulières de conflits peuvent surgir, même à l'intérieur d'un groupe directeur : un conflit de vues et de valeurs en relation avec la vie extérieure du charisme et de la spiritualité d'un ordre ou une congrégation donnée. Ce n'est pas aisé d'avoir à faire avec cette sorte de conflits. Des réflexions ultérieures sur les stratégies concernant ces circonstances sont nécessaires.

- **Cecilia Patiño Cardona, RGS** -

## ***Proceso del Perdón-Reconciliación***

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El perdón y la reconciliación son la señal clara y evidente del Reino de Dios en nuestra vida y la experiencia central de nuestra fe. Nuestro Dios, Padre-Madre, es un Dios de compasión, “*Tardo a la cólera y rico en bondad*” (Nm 14:18).

El perdón y la reconciliación comprenden dos elementos constitutivos: la justicia en sentido restaurativo y la verdad. El conocimiento de la verdad es fundamental para que las personas víctimas de la violencia, se puedan abrir al perdón y la reconciliación, así serán libres, “*conoceréis la Verdad y la verdad os hará libres*” (Jn 8:32).

En el proceso del perdón-reconciliación se desarrollan cuatro (4) fases, subdivididas a su vez en diferentes pasos. La secuencia y el tiempo necesarios para la ejecución de éstas depende del ritmo que lleve cada persona o grupo. Estas fases son:

### **1. La catarsis**

En esta fase, se ayuda a la persona víctima de violencia, a recobrar el autocontrol, el respeto de si misma y el sentido del autodomínio. Un paso muy importante en esta primera fase, es el de la adecuada preparación, que permita crear ante todo un ambiente de seguridad, confianza y simpatía, porque las personas víctimas de violencia normalmente se sienten prisioneras del miedo que las lleva a desconfiar de todos y de todo. Otro paso fundamental, es el de hacer memoria y contar la historia, de la manera más viva que sea posible, esto ayuda a la víctima a recobrar el control sobre su propia vida.

### **2. La decisión**

Esta fase implica introducir la comprensión y vivencia del concepto de justicia restaurativa y de compasión hacia el ofensor. Se motiva aquí a la persona ofendida a practicar el difícil ejercicio de la compasión, a en poner en práctica la bienaventuranza: “*Bienaventurados los misericordiosos, porque alcanzarán misericordia*” (Mt 5:7).

### **3. La Acción**

En esta fase se ayuda a la víctima a romper cadenas, soltarse y caminar en libertad y alegría. Los actos simbólicos de reparación sirven para hacer duelo-luto y mediante el rito cerrar las heridas. Juega también un papel de especial importancia la reconexión intencional con la comunidad y con el grupo. Es el momento de llegar a un compromiso de renovación y vida nueva. “*En verdad, en verdad te digo: el que no nazca de lo alto no puede ver el Reino de Dios*” (Jn 3:3).

### **4. Los Resultados**

Las personas o grupos, después de un desarrollo profundo de este proceso, poco a poco van recuperando la seguridad individual, la identidad y el sentido de la vida. Se experimenta una gran paz y libertad interior, un gozo profundo y plenitud de vida, además mejora significativamente la salud mental, física y emocional.

El perdón y la reconciliación son el humilde reconocimiento de la limitación humana y de la necesidad que tenemos unos de otros. Es gracias al perdón que entendemos la poderosa fuerza del amor de Dios hacia nosotros/as y podemos afirmar con toda verdad: “*Amor y Verdad se han dado cita, Justicia y Paz se abrazan*” (Slm 85:11).

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- ***Maria Grazia Campostrini, SMC*** -

## ***Punti forti emersi sulla formazione alla non violenza***

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Voglio ricordare alcuni punti forti emersi in questi giorni dalla nostra riflessione, sulla formazione alla non violenza.

E' apparsa la necessità di una formazione da farsi a vari livelli:

- Di base (intesa come formazione nelle comunità cristiana)
- Per il mediatore
- Per i giovani in formazione, nelle nostre case e Istituti religiosi

### **A livello di base**

Abbiamo visto che la soluzione dei conflitti inizia con una prevenzione da attuarsi fin da bambini, attraverso un'educazione alla pace e alla non violenza, attraverso la promozione di incontri e iniziative che riuniscano giovani di culture e religioni diverse.

E' pure di grande importanza aiutare a leggere la storia in modo obiettivo: i manuali scolastici non sempre rispecchiano la verità dei fatti.

E' necessario offrire mezzi che aiutino a interpretare le situazioni di violenza, volute e programmate, e far conoscere i conflitti in atto.

### **Per il mediatore**

La figura del mediatore, perché possa essere tale, non s'improvvisa, deve essere preparata fin dall'inizio nel contesto della formazione alla conoscenza di sé, della gestione dei conflitti e delle proprie emozioni e sentimenti.

### **Per i giovani in formazione nelle nostre case religiose**

- E' importante dare ai giovani, ancora durante la propria formazione, la possibilità di vivere esperienze significative in missione, come veri e propri tirocini.
  - Fare in modo che i Centri di formazione siano localizzati in zone nelle quali i candidati siano esposti alle situazioni reali, del Paese in cui vivono (inserzione).
  - La formazione deve tener presente i nuovi orizzonti della missione e suscitare interesse verso i grandi temi, attuali, della giustizia, della pace, della povertà e della riconciliazione.
  - Aiutare i giovani ad affrontare, in maniera positiva, le diversità culturali che s'incontrano già nelle comunità formative, così che si abituino ad affrontare eventuali conflitti, o *shock* culturali, nella futura vita missionaria.
  - Aiutare i giovani fin dal loro discernimento vocazionale, ad affrontare con chiarezza la realtà della missione oggi, senza ambiguità e illusioni.
  - La spiritualità della *Kénosis* e del martirio, deve essere affrontata come bagaglio indispensabile per la missione oggi.
  - Valorizzare, nel contesto formativo, la figura del riconciliatore, così come quella del confessore.
-

***... Still About  
Reconciliation***



- *Leonel Narváez Gómez, IMC* -

## ***From the Irrationality of Violence to the Irrationality of Reconciliation. Rebuilding the City From Within***

*By virtually any standard of measurement,  
Latin America ranks as one of the most  
violent regions in the world. Violence  
and crime pose serious threats to its  
relatively fragile democracies"*

[Hugo Fruhling *et al.*, *Crime and Violence in Latin  
America* (2003)].

*The real strength of terrorists lies in their ability to inspire  
hate, and elude detection,*

*And in their murderous imagination* (Christopher  
Dickey, *Newsweek*, special issue, December 2003).

Bogotá, April 2004

### **Introduction**

The twentieth century will be remembered not only as one of the most violent centuries experienced by the human race, but above all as the century that has developed the most technologies in the service of hatred and vengeance. And this has been encouraged by governments claiming to seek peace, democracy and freedom.

In the year 2000 a total of 1.6 million people all over the world perished as a result of collective violence, interpersonal violence and self-inflicted violence. Half of these deaths were suicides, 35% were homicides and almost 20% were caused by armed conflict. The category with the highest rate of death by homicide throughout the world was men aged between 15 and 29.

These figures, dramatic as they are, are only part of the story. Other kinds of violence, such as physical, sexual and psychological ill-treatment, do not result in death but cause serious harm to the health and welfare of many millions of people, and cost governments huge sums of money in health care, judicial costs, absenteeism from work, losses in productivity and numerous related effects. According to the WHO, violence is now "a leading worldwide public health problem".<sup>1</sup>

The figure of 815,000 suicides in the year 2000 is particularly tragic and worrying because of the contagious nature of the phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> This is a world problem and is becoming ever more serious. An increasing number of people do not want to go on living; more and more people are failing to find a meaning in life, or a sense of security, or a sense of integration in society. These are undoubtedly people who have nurtured their anger and hatred towards life and for whom suicide has become a way of taking revenge against life, against themselves and against society.

In this essay I hope to show, firstly, that the age-old paradigm of responding to violence with more violence is beginning to make no sense; and, secondly, that the root causes of violence are not only objective in nature (poverty, exclusion, injustice, corruption)<sup>3</sup> but also subjective (accumulated hatred, resentment and desire for revenge).<sup>4</sup>

As Nelson Mandela perceptively remarks in his prologue to the recent World Report on Violence and Health (WHO, 2002), "*patterns of violence are more pervasive and widespread in societies where the authorities endorse the use of violence through their own actions*". Totalitarian governments, economic exclusion and authoritarian cultures are clear examples of the objective causes of violence.<sup>5</sup> What is often not realized is that these objective causes stir up anger, resentment and desires for revenge which, over time, are transformed into causes that are worse than the original ones, producing a vicious circle that never ends.

The purpose of this essay, then, is very consciously to highlight the subjective root causes (in both individuals and institutions) which are generally associated with manifestations of violence and to build a range of responses to that violence with specific reference to Latin America. Finally, I discuss the experience of the Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation, whose efforts are gradually beginning to bear fruit in Bogotá and other cities in Colombia and Brazil where these schools are currently in operation.

## Violence in Latin America

By virtually any standard of measurement, Latin America ranks as one of the most violent regions in the world. Violence and crime pose serious threats to its relatively fragile democracies.<sup>6</sup> It is a matter of concern that the most violent crimes are those which have shown the greatest increases; especially inasmuch as any crime normally involves – apart from the immediate loss of control resulting from anger – the intentional nurturing of resentment and plans of vengeance. In addition, a growing number of people are living in fear and insecurity because of the mounting wave of violence and terrorism. Security is, in fact, now among the preferred topics of political leaders. In some places the only response has been to increase the size of the police force, the army and the judicial system, thus strengthening the culture of oppression. These measures have proved to be inadequate and have, in some cases, paradoxically become the cause of yet more insecurity. In other cases the phenomenon known as *vigilantism* has grown up, that is, the privatization of security with people having their own armies selling security services such as armaments, alarms, fences, security guards and guard dogs. There has been a gradual, paradoxical, drift towards sacrificing freedom for security.

One of the most serious consequences of this growing insecurity is the *alienation* of people from their own society and, worse still, an accumulated sense of collective rage at being obliged to accept such a situation. This sense of alienation has been becoming a serious impediment to building up a sense of community, which is, in fact, the place where the best solution to the problem of insecurity should most naturally be sought.

### A tragedy in figures

Over the past decade, Latin America and the Caribbean have stood out as having extremely high homicide rates. In 1998 the homicide rate was 18.4 per 100,000 inhabitants,<sup>7</sup> almost twice the rate for the whole world (10.7).<sup>8</sup> It is estimated that in the ten years from 1984 to 1994 homicides increased by more than 44%. Rates were highest in the Andean region at 51.9, reflecting an increase in violence of 105.9%.<sup>9</sup> Violence is the third most common cause of death in Latin America (and in the rest of the world) for men aged between 15 and 44.<sup>10</sup>

The homicide rate is only one measure of the level of violence in a society. Another measure is *victimization* arising from any other kind of criminal violence. The victimization of women, for example, in comparison with the victimization of men, is worryingly high compared with other parts of the world.

Another type of measure used to estimate the level of violence in a society is the DALY (disability-adjusted life year), the number of years lost as a result of disability caused by violence. In 1990 it was estimated that Latin America and the Caribbean, with a population of 444 million, were losing 5,447,000 years of useful life each year, an average of 4.49 days per person per year.<sup>11</sup>

### Domestic violence – an invisible epidemic

Violence is a highly complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. A constant problem for the social sciences is to arrive at a suitably clear definition of the different forms of violence and to reach a better understanding of their characteristics, risk factors and results. Violence may be characterized according to a number of variables: the individuals who suffer it (children, women, the old, the disabled), the perpetrators of violence (gangsters, drug-dealers, young people), the nature of the aggression (physical, psychological, sexual), the motives (political, economic, racial, religious, emotional), or the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator (family members, friends, strangers).

Of particular concern within these various types of violence is domestic violence (that is, violence between persons linked by ties of kinship, marriage or common law). It is domestic violence which, in a manner of speaking, breeds violence in the community generally. Social violence is, undoubtedly, behaviour which is learned, primarily in the domestic environment through aggressive behaviour by parents, the ill-treatment of children, and generally any pattern of violent behaviour by members of the family. There is now some fairly solid evidence for stating that children who are exposed to violence – whether as victims or as witnesses – are more likely to show such behaviour as adults.<sup>12</sup>

A strategy of reducing domestic violence as an effective way of reducing social violence is becoming increasingly important. Domestic violence may be physical, psychological or sexual. Although men may sometimes be victims of domestic violence, women and children are by far the most frequent sufferers.

Strangely enough, although violence within the family is the kind which has by far the greatest effect on the lives of people and communities, it is this kind of violence that is most studiously ignored.

The factors which contribute most to this kind of violence seem to be: the size and density of the family, a history of violence in the family, per capita income, and the social forces and norms influencing the family (especially if the norms are more

authoritarian than egalitarian or democratic). It is now well known that violent families tend to perpetuate themselves.<sup>13</sup> There are, undoubtedly, other factors at work such as poor child-raising skills, including inadequate care and supervision, which are closely linked to antisocial, aggressive or delinquent behaviour.<sup>14</sup> Wide-ranging studies of domestic violence show that the most violent homes are those where authoritarian norms are present, where men are dominant and where the use of physical violence is socially acceptable.<sup>15</sup>

On this basis alone we may hypothesize that poverty is of itself a risk factor likely to produce violence, but it is not a direct cause of violent behaviour; rather, it is associated with stress caused by uncertainty, economic deprivation and overcrowding. Stress may lead to violent actions in individuals who show a tendency to aggressive behaviour (whether by nature or upbringing). Frustration and stress tend to trigger violent situations but are not strictly causes or risk factors leading to violence. Similarly poverty, although readily associated with violence, is not necessarily its cause.

As is well known, there are biological concepts to explain the greater violence of male behaviour compared with female behaviour. Women have a greater tendency to display the values of kindness and tenderness, whereas men are more inclined towards displays of strength and power. It is young men, certainly, who are more prone to suffer the effects of violence. Persons with a low social or economic status, the unemployed, and alcohol and drug abusers show a greater propensity to social and domestic violence. These tendencies are all the greater if the person has suffered from cerebral abnormalities, neurological dysfunction, or other dysfunctions of a physical origin, including attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, learning disability, prenatal or perinatal complications and minor physical abnormalities.

### **The multi-causal nature of violence**

Violence is multi-causal in nature: the risk factors of violence may originate in the society, in the family, or in individuals themselves. In the case of Latin America, the chief risk factors include income inequality, violence in the media, the availability of guns, the after-effects of war, weak institutions of law and order (police and courts), cultural norms and the region's own history of violence. In a recent region-wide study by the World Bank, income inequality was highlighted as a major risk factor in generating violence because it dangerously arouses feelings of anger, privation and exclusion which then become powerful stimulants to violent behaviour.<sup>16</sup> Being poor is bad enough, but feeling angry about being

poor is even worse. A poor man who is angry is doubly poor. All too often, this hidden ailment is overlooked by government development programmes.

Societies which have recently emerged from periods of civil strife are particularly vulnerable to violence and tend to experience high rates of homicide and criminal behaviour generally. Cultural patterns have a strong influence on the generation of violence and, for this reason, programmes against violence which fail to take account of these cultural norms are at risk of failure. The same is true of patterns of social behaviour: a community that provides models of *peaceful behaviour* (theatre groups, music groups, sporting organizations, community action committees, etc.) offer fewer opportunities for violent behaviour.

This is not to say that poverty is necessarily the cause of violence. In fact, whole communities in Latin America, poverty-stricken as they are, are not violent. Poverty can nonetheless trigger social violence, especially when it is associated with high levels of income inequality, high unemployment and inadequate education for young people (PAHO, 1998). However, the reverse may also be true: violence may be the cause of poverty. Violence does, in fact, generate anger and the desire for revenge, resulting in lower inhibitions against violent conduct and generating *demonstrative models* which erode the social norms that govern interpersonal relations.

### **The socio-economic costs of violence**

As Moser<sup>17</sup> has observed, violence has an impact on physical capital (fewer investors), human capital (less education, less productive work, more development of criminal skills), social capital (less co-operation and organization), and natural capital (fewer environmental resources); all these impacts will seriously affect the balanced growth and the development of a society. When people produce less, their income goes down. This means that they consume less and aggregate demand is reduced. The economic multiplier effects of violence include lower capital accumulation, lower rates of participation in work, reduced productivity, absenteeism, lower income and, hence, a lower level of saving and investment in the macro economy.

Another serious impact is that of intra-family violence on the economic future of children. Children who suffer or witness domestic violence tend to have more discipline problems at school and are more likely to repeat school years. Domestic violence uses up State resources (police, courts, social services, etc.) which could be used to tackle other urgent priorities.<sup>18</sup> The non-money costs of violence are even higher. According to a World Health Organization estimate, the number of years lost by people who suffer

domestic violence in the whole world is 9 million DALYs each year, a figure which far exceeds the number of days lost by women as a result of cancer of any type, and more than twice the number of DALYs lost by women as a result of traffic accidents.<sup>19</sup> Domestic violence is now a cause of many more lost DALYs than traffic accidents, congenital abnormalities, rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular ailments or even pneumonia.<sup>20</sup>

The social multiplier effects of violence include the transmission of violence from one generation to another, erosion of social capital, a reduced quality of life and lower participation in democratic processes. Of particular seriousness is the erosion in social capital that results from the isolation experienced by the victims of domestic violence. Thus basic norms of communication and co-operation are undermined, violent attitudes are reinforced and these same attitudes are rapidly assimilated by the younger generation.

Social violence is increasingly becoming the most serious threat to fundamental freedoms, respect for the law and the consolidation of democratic systems of government in Latin America and throughout the world.

### **Expert opinions**

In 2003, Tulchin and Golding,<sup>21</sup> after gathering extensive information on violence in Latin America, made the following recommendations:

First, it is vital that governments should understand that *prevention* at grass roots level in the community must become a *priority* area in which to invest human and economic resources. Specifically, it is vital that strategies be implemented to narrow the gap between the police and ordinary citizens. The objective of restoring and strengthening a culture of forgiveness and reconciliation is, to a large extent, consistent with this view.

Second, there is a need to provide clear indicators to define objectives and to measure the effectiveness of proposed actions. Policies should address the most urgent risk factors, and this implies action to promote research in this area.

Third, there must be a demand for greater internal and external control of police activity.

Fourth, democratic institutions and mechanisms for mediation must be strengthened as an effective and less costly means of crime prevention.

Fifth, law enforcement agencies must show ever greater professionalism, be better paid, and be given access to the latest technology.

Sixth, government policies must deal sensitively with the hurt, resentment and desire for revenge (left over from past systems based on violence or military or subversive regimes).

Finally, encouragement should be given to international co-operation between government organizations and civil society groups.

The area of peaceful coexistence ("*convivencia*") and public security is now seen as comprising four key elements for the development of strategies and policies. First, coexistence and security are seen as a *conditio sine qua non* for development, and not as ends in themselves. Second, coexistence and security have lost their military overtones and are beginning to be associated with human development. Third, coexistence and security are perceived to be the result of interactions based on peaceful relations between government and community, rather than on an authoritarian approach which seeks only to preserve the *status quo* at all costs. Fourth, a clear distinction is now drawn between national security and public safety.

The general conclusion underlying these recommendations is that if the subjective causes of violence are not addressed, governments are liable to fall into the temptation of proposing actions which are ever more repressive and militaristic, or worse still, communities will perversely organize into self-defence groups, endangering democracy and law and order based on the nation state.

### **A forgotten cause of violence**

Although risk factors interact in many different ways, it is worth enquiring which of these social factors are responsible for the increasing violence in Latin America over the last ten years. The statistics on income inequality do not appear to support the view that inequality is the cause of the violence, or at least the growth in homicide rates. In fact, some countries (Brazil and Venezuela) have seen a decline in income inequality along with an increase in violence, while others (Mexico and Costa Rica) have seen a fall in violence accompanied by rising income inequality.

One hypothesis which is increasingly gaining support is that the massive availability of guns, together with anger and the resulting loss of inhibitions against the use of violence, are exacerbating certain potential factors that could precipitate violence, namely, inequality, poverty, and the negative role of the media. This gives support to the belief that an effective response must address not only people's external needs but their internal needs in order to manage constructively the anger, the hatred



and the desire for revenge that is burning within them. Cities and people are, by and large, rebuilt from within.

### A new paradigm

While any attempt to reduce insecurity and violence in Latin America will certainly mean strengthening the civil institutions of law and order, at the same time it means, above all else, fostering a *new culture* of forgiveness and reconciliation. The fostering of this *new culture* thus implies the promotion of a different culture from the repressive one which is constantly invoked by the use of arms, imprisonment, police action, harsh punishment (life imprisonment and the death penalty) which over time result in the erosion of social capital and the loss of public commitment to building cities based on democracy.

Humanity has manifestly been affected by a form of *collective blindness* which has allowed a culture of retaliation to develop. We humans have convinced ourselves that the most effective way of responding to violence is with more violence. As a result, the courts in which justice is administered have become places where legalized vengeance is officially sanctioned.

So far as Latin America is concerned, there are very few countries in the region where the use of force has resulted in more order or more peace.<sup>22</sup>

It is often argued that the way of renewal to curb violence will require the creation of a moderate policing system, an efficient judicial system and, above all, an improved understanding and a standard of conduct on the part of the public that would not necessarily lead to repressive measures or escalating violence. These things are necessary but not sufficient. There is an urgent need for more concerted efforts to develop approaches based on a deeper knowledge of the underlying causes of violence.

The failure to control emotions, particularly anger, and a lack of knowledge of the means for transforming hatred, resentment and the desire for revenge, are the most deep-rooted causes underlying all manifestations of violence. These emotions are buried deep within each individual and it is here, therefore, that any action must be directed. Now more than ever, there is a need to reach out to the heart of the city and to the heart of each individual within it. Cities are also built *from within*. Fortunately, punitive justice and the culture of retaliation are now beginning to be seriously questioned.<sup>23</sup> There is an urgent need to promote new systems which favour restorative justice and a culture of reconciliation.

In many countries in Central America levels of criminality in times of peace have been worse than in

times of war. This is no doubt partly due to worsening economic conditions and the growth of criminal organizations, but basically what is surfacing is the hatred which has been building up over the years of violence and has not found any *positive ways* of transforming itself.<sup>24</sup>

This lack of consensus on the *deep-rooted causes* of violence is delaying and preventing the development of comprehensive plans to overcome them. We are under so much pressure to adopt quick solutions that we are too busy putting out fires to spend time on fire prevention. This absence of reflection is encouraging the use of actions which get instant results in preventing violence but are normally equally violent themselves; such actions only serve, in the long run, to strengthen authoritarian regimes. Some authors have rightly observed that “civil wars have militarized society to such an extent as to cause a deterioration in people’s ability to live peacefully together and have trained people to use violence as a universal instrument for the solving of disputes”.<sup>25</sup>

In a recent best-seller, *1000 Years for Revenge*, Peter Lance<sup>26</sup> discusses the errors that led to the failure to prevent the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers of 11 September 2001. The book’s title is particularly significant in alluding to an ancient saying from the Baluchistan region of Pakistan, home of the notorious terrorist Ramzi Yousef: “*If it takes me ten centuries to kill my enemy, I will wait a thousand years for revenge*”. In his book Peter Lance records the testimony of numerous Arabs and Muslims who hold the Americans responsible for the century-long sufferings of their people. Clearly, he is referring not only to the injustices committed against Arab societies, but also to the accumulated anger and the need for vengeance which has been stirred up over the centuries in their people’s hearts. Once more the perverse human desire for revenge – both on the part of Muslims and the American Government – is paralyzing and holding back the development of individuals and cultures.

Some studies of violence and criminality<sup>27</sup> emphasize the importance of policies of *prevention* or policies to *strengthen democratic institutions* in the search for lasting solutions. Strengthening democratic institutions in the most violent parts of the world has become one of the most effective ways of dealing with the problem of violence. *Building democracy* involves, essentially, starting a powerful movement towards seeking settlements. This means people ceasing to react to insecurity and violence by taking action which is no less violent and is precisely what does most to threaten the culture of settlement and undermine the very foundations of Latin America’s fragile democracies. More important still, it means that solutions will cease to be brought in from outside

but will be generated from within communities themselves, although any support considered appropriate could continue to come from outside.

In most cases, it should be remembered, the *perception of insecurity* is what gives the best indication of the impact of violence on the psychology of a people, as well as on their political and economic life.

### **Forgiveness and reconciliation as an objective**

In dealing with violence in Latin America the main emphasis has, up to now, essentially been on policing: combating violence through punitive actions using the police and the courts, while providing some support for victims. Although punishment does provide some restraint against violence, insufficient attention is still being paid to preventive measures, even though they are cheaper and more cost-effective. Moreover, the few projects currently aimed at preventing violence in Latin America are still placing the emphasis on the security/arms aspect, with the anger/vengeance aspect often being ignored.

In Latin America a number of experiments have been tried which, although valuable, have not come to grips with the critical issue of hatred and vengeance. These experiments include such projects as *Community Policing* in Brazil, *Community Security* in Costa Rica, the *weapons collection* programme in El Salvador, the *Citizens' Forum* in Honduras and also the successful *Convivencia ciudadana* project in Bogotá.

The project known as "Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation" (*Escuelas de Perdón y Reconciliación, ESPERE*) came into being under the auspices of the "*Convivencia ciudadana*". Many thousands of Colombians who have suffered the cruelty of violence are nurturing anger, hatred, resentment and the desire for revenge. Victims, in failing to deal with their anger and hatred in a positive way, as shown by recent statistics in the case of Bogotá, are at a high risk of becoming perpetrators of violence in their turn. Anger does undoubtedly build up over time and may be both individual and collective; worse still, it may lead to sickness and paralysis in the inner working of both individuals and societies.

Since 2002, Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation (ESPERE) have been set up in 59 of the most violent and conflict-ridden neighbourhoods in Bogotá, Colombia.<sup>29</sup>

The cornerstone of the project is the training of *animadores*, or facilitators. It is they who form the backbone of the initiative. A facilitator will have come from a grass-roots organization of a social, political, religious or cultural nature, or will wish to play a part

in overcoming the difficulties which living together in a society generates within groups and individuals.

In the years 2002 and 2003, 400 neighbourhood facilitators were given training in the techniques of forgiveness and reconciliation. As soon as their training was complete they went on to set up local schools of forgiveness and reconciliation in their own neighbourhoods. The schools are made up of 10 to 15 people who, after receiving help in self-motivation from the facilitator, have decided to make a start on the road to forgiveness and reconciliation.

A method consisting of ten modules lasting approximately 80 hours in all (eight hours per module) has been designed. The facilitator and the selected groups meet at private houses, school classrooms, church facilities, community meeting rooms or any agreed venue and the facilitator replicates the experience gained during his/her training. This involves a group exercise in which the combined experience of the participants becomes a valuable source of support to those who have been victims of crimes of violence.

### **Bringing back reconciliation**

Up to now the social sciences have done some laudable work in the fields of conflict resolution, mediation, arbitration and similar aspects. In fact, some very valuable theoretical writing is available on this and there are people trained in these areas. However, this still does not reach into people's hearts to make contact with those areas where effective solutions and motivations that make *convivencia* possible can be found. The training given in the ESPERE schools aims to reach these parts of people's innermost being. It is here that violence festers, and for this very reason it is here that harmony and peace can again begin to revive. Participants in the ESPERE schools learn, essentially, to use a number of very simple tools to work out their anger, to transform their hatred and resentment and, in fact, to take any specific actions that will help them to prevent the escalation of violence and facilitate the processes of forgiveness and reconciliation.

The ten modules of the programme have been carefully designed to ease the difficult and complex process of forgiveness and reconciliation. These ten steps are: **1)** What is and what is not forgiveness; **2)** Emerging from darkness into light; **3)** Deciding to forgive; **4)** Seeing with fresh eyes; **5)** Sharing pain; **6)** Accepting the other in myself; **7)** Building truth; **8)** Guaranteeing justice; **9)** Reaching a settlement; **10)** Celebration and reparation.

These ten work modules are parts of a structure, rather like a shared musical score or road map: a secure environment, basic motivation, presentation of a case,

theoretical inspiration, commitment and ritual. These modules and the underlying musical score are laden with heavy symbolic overtones in which colour, aroma, music, signs, play, representations and agreements play an important role.

Although the ESPERE schools are no miracle solution, some significant changes are already beginning to take place in the transformation of intra-family and community conflicts. Considerable progress is already being reported in the reduction of intra-family violence and there has been a marked strengthening of personal and community ties.

People who attend a School of Forgiveness and Reconciliation notice important changes in their own perceptions: they recover a sense of the meaning of life, a sense of security and a feeling of belonging to the community. An 80-hour course at an ESPERE school normally ends with a celebration of remembrance and restitution in which people who have suffered any kind of violence or injustice have the opportunity to recall their tragic memories in public and to have their pain recognized and to receive some sort of restitution, in most cases symbolic, from the neighbourhood community.

The ESPERE facilitators are now beginning to receive the more professional support of university academics, especially in the social sciences, in cases of people who have suffered particularly traumatic experiences. This service has been given the name of "peace dispensaries" (*consultorios de paz*).

The facilitator, it should be noted, is originally chosen by a community institution (the church, a communal action committee [*junta de acción comunal*] or an NGO) and it will be the institution that provides all the support necessary to ensure that the facilitator can do his job as effectively as possible.

To ensure that the ESPERE schools can continue to operate, a team of professional workers provides a system of communication and co-ordination among the various schools, monitors them constantly, publishes a monthly newsletter, provides teaching materials and generally gives theoretical and methodological support.

Sustainability is a fundamental aspect of the ESPERE strategy. In fact, one of the strengths of the ESPERE project is that methodologies are now being developed to follow up, support and consolidate the processes in which they are involved. The objective is to foster a culture of responsibility in time and space for the processes that are being generated in individuals and in the wider community.

The ESPERE schools are gradually starting to make their services more specialized. There are now ESPERE schools for young people, for children, for parish groups and for priests and nuns. The schools are also arousing a growing interest in academic institutions.

Within the city of Bogotá, the ESPERE schools are now operating in 12 districts (*localidades*). Each *localidad* has a co-ordinator whose functions are to provide development, administrative and other support. The ESPERE schools are also present, albeit less prominently, in other Colombian cities, but it is in Brazil (notably Rio de Janeiro, Bello Horizonte, Brasília and Salvador de Bahía) where they are gaining real momentum.

In the light of day-to-day practice, new conceptual and methodological tools are being borrowed and developed in an ongoing process of improvement. These contributions are being used by institutions following other approaches in their work for peace in Colombia and Brazil. A start will shortly be made to extend the service to other cities in the country in association with REDEPAZ (the largest Colombian network of pro-peace initiatives) and some Catholic dioceses, with a particular focus on those cities that show the highest rates of criminality and violence.

Strategies to strengthen peaceful coexistence and public safety have for centuries shown a markedly rationalist and police-centred bias. The ESPERE schools aim to offer a different paradigm based on technologies for work in the community that emphasize the strengthening of emotional intelligence.

In their forgiveness and reconciliation work, the ESPERE schools have chosen to focus on three themes or processes in both individuals and groups: the management of emotions, and particularly anger; the institutionalization of mediators in the community; and the strengthening of new techniques for the transformation of conflicts.

Crime and violence often flourish in society because mediating institutions either do not exist or do not work. This leads to the formation of mediating institutions of an undesirable nature (subversive groups, gangs of juveniles, organized groups dedicated to "ordinary", or non-political, crime). The result is that the social capital of peace is changed into the social capital of violence. The ESPERE schools are gradually developing a social capital of positive mediation to serve as an institution for the prevention of violent behaviour and also for assertive negotiation to resolve conflicts.

Certain paradigms are beginning to form a part of the day-to-day language of the ESPERE schools. It is held that the irrationality of violence must be

countered with the irrationality of forgiveness; that a poor man who feels anger and resentment is doubly poor; that cities are built outwards from within; that forgiving is not forgetting, but remembering with different eyes; that without reconciliation there can be no future; that hate and resentment have strong psychosomatic effects; that truth and justice are vital for reconciliation; and, finally, that compassion and tenderness must be rediscovered as the most basic elements for men and women to build peace.

## Conclusion

To talk about forgiveness and reconciliation is both to talk about tenderness and compassion, and also to talk about a new creation. To talk about tenderness and compassion, in today's world, may sound somewhat out of place. However, these are the qualities that are most fundamental to human nature, especially if humans are seen as *created beings* who consequently share the same essential qualities of the Creator: His goodness and His love. In her book *Three Guineas* (1938), Virginia Woolf observes that war is a game played by men and that the killing machine has a sex and it is male. Woolf was trying to say that to avoid war it will be necessary to recover the female faculties in human beings; among these are tenderness and goodness which are, in fact, the fullest expression of the Father God and Mother God of created beings. "His mercy endureth for ever" is a phrase frequently used in Psalms and sacred books generally in attempting to describe what God is like.

Two: the forgiveness and reconciliation paradigm is only possible for somebody who can see him/herself from a *new place* in the cosmic, historical, cultural and psychological sense: from the perspective of a *new creation*. Normally it is the victims, not the perpetrators, who have this privilege and this grace. The liberating strength of God enables them to understand that the message of degradation inflicted on them by the perpetrator shall not prevail and that, on the contrary, the experience of Jesus gives them strength to recover all their humanity and dignity. It is this experience of being *touched by God*, an experience that is often unconscious, which puts the victim in a *new place*. The result is a *new creation*. This is why St Paul is able to affirm: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor 5:17-18).

The great paradox, then, is that the victim thus reconciled is able to comprehend the pain and the moaning of the perpetrator. This ability has powerfully transforming effects on the perpetrator.

In his Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2004, Pope John Paul II recalled that, "for the establishment of true peace in the world, justice must find its fulfilment in charity. Certainly law is the first road leading to peace [...]. Yet one does not arrive at the end of this road unless justice is complemented by love. Justice and love sometimes appear to be opposing forces. In fact they are but two faces of a single reality, two dimensions of human life needing to be mutually integrated. Historical experience shows this to be true. It shows how justice is frequently unable to free itself from rancour, hatred and even cruelty. By itself, justice is not enough [...]. For this reason I have often reminded Christians and all persons of good will that forgiveness is needed for solving the problems of individuals and peoples. There is no peace without forgiveness!" (n. 10).

These words acquire special meaning at times when humanity is tearing itself apart, blindly answering terror with terror. Terror is only vanquished by love, however paradoxical that may sound. The logic of responding to violence with more violence and the logic of punitive justice – the experience of centuries tells us this – definitely do not lead to democracy or to peace! To counter the irrationality of violence we must continue to advocate the irrationality of forgiveness and reconciliation!

***Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.***

*(Mark Twain)*

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The data have been taken from the *World Report on Violence and Health* (Summary) (Geneva, World Health Organization (WHO), 2002), pp. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> The seasonal and contagious nature of suicide was revealed by Emile Durkheim in 1897. His study followed a line of enquiry which is one of the most frequently explored nowadays by those interested in the subject.

<sup>3</sup> At the 2004 Special Summit of the Americas, 34 countries signed the Declaration of Nuevo León recognizing poverty, hunger and social inequality as the main challenges. According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) inequality is the chief problem in the Latin American region. Of a total population of some 800 million, whereas the richest 20% receive roughly 60% of the income, the poorest 20% receive only about 3%. Poverty, as measured by the proportion of the population with an income below \$2 a day in purchasing power parity terms, affects more than a third of the region's



population, that is, about 180 million people. Roughly 70% of the total number of poor people in the region are concentrated in its most densely populated countries. The incidence of rural poverty (59.1%) is more than twice that of urban poverty (26.1%). Poverty in the region is strongly associated with low levels of education and with belonging to indigenous groups or groups of Afro-American descent. See *Tiempos del Mundo*, year 8, no. 47, 20-26 November 2003, pp. 43-45, and year 9, no. 4, 23-28 January 2004, pp. 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Authors at the cutting edge in the study of hatred, anger and revenge as subjective factors include Robert Enright, Everet Worthington, Robin Casarjian, Geiko Muller Farenholtz, Aaron T. Beck, Kathleen Greider, Judith Herman, Harvey Langholtz. Judith Thompson, Donna Hicks, Sousan Abadian are leading thinkers in the area of *social healing*.

<sup>5</sup> The word *cause* is inappropriate when discussing violence: the expression *risk factors* is preferred. It is in this last sense that the word is used here.

<sup>6</sup> See the recent book by Hugo Fruhling, Joseph S. Tulchin and Heather A. Golding (eds), *Crime and Violence in Latin America, Citizen Security, Democracy and the State* (Washington D.C., Woodrow Wilson Press, 2003). Interesting data are also provided by Robinson Salazar Pérez, *América Latina: conflicto, violencia y paz en el siglo XXI* [Latin America: Conflict, Violence and Peace in the 21st Century] (Libros En Red, E-publication, 2003). See also Robinson Salazar Pérez, *Comportamiento de la sociedad civil latinoamericana* [The Behaviour of Latin American Civil Societies] (Libros En Red, E-publication, 2002), and Robinson Salazar Pérez, Eduardo Sandoval Forero and Dorangélica de la Rocha Almazán, *Democracias en riesgo en América latina* [Democracies at Risk in Latin America] (Libros En Red, 2003). In their introduction these authors make the following statement: "*Latin America is living through one of the periods in which democracy and political institutions have been most at risk. Electoral enclaves, the ethos of a distorted political culture, the lack of civic awareness, intolerance of others, the seizure of public spaces and the unprincipled behaviour of the media in failing properly to analyse public affairs, are matters which, although they may appear insignificant, in the practice of democracy become huge obstacles to the achievement of objectives*" [Free translation of Spanish original].

<sup>7</sup> PAHO: Pan-American Health Organization. See [http://www.paho.org/Spanish/DD/PIN/Numero18\\_article1.htm](http://www.paho.org/Spanish/DD/PIN/Numero18_article1.htm)

<sup>8</sup> See Andrew Morrison, Mayra Buvinic and Michael Shifter, "The violent Americas: risk factors, consequences, and policy implications of social and domestic violence", in Fruhling *et al.*, *Crime and Violence in Latin America*, pp. 93-122. It should be noted that during this period the homicide rate in sub-Saharan Africa was 40.1, with no other region having a rate of more than 9 per 100,000.

<sup>9</sup> Fernando Carrion in *Diario Hoy* [Daily Diary], Quito, 12 July 2003.

<sup>10</sup> See Christopher J.L. Murray and Alan D. Lopez (eds), *The Global Burden of Disease: a comprehensive assessment of mortality and disability from diseases, injuries and risk factors in 1990 and projected*

*to 2020* (Cambridge, Harvard University School of Health, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> See Andrew Morrison *et al.*, "The violent Americas", note 12, p. 97.

<sup>12</sup> See L.R. Huesman *et al.*, "The stability of aggression over time and generations", in *Developmental Psychology*, 20 (1984), pp. 1120-1134. Also Linda Dahlberg, "Youth violence in the United States: major trends, risk factors and preventive approaches", in *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14 (4) (1998), pp. 259-272.

<sup>13</sup> The theory of the culture of poverty developed by the anthropologist Oscar Lewis in his books *Five Families: The Anthropology of Poverty* (New York, Basic Books, 1959) and *The Children of Sánchez* (New York, Random House, 1961) might well be applied to the culture of violence too. Lewis's theory was based on his field work in Mexico, India, Puerto Rico and New York. In his view, violence as a way of life is an attempt by people in the lowest strata of society to bear the anger and despair caused by the realization that they cannot achieve success in terms of the dominant values and goals of the society in which they live. Exclusion breeds anger and, in the long run, violence.

<sup>14</sup> See Dahlberg, "Youth violence in the United States". See also D.P. Farrington, "Childhood aggression and adult violence: early precursors and later-life outcomes", in D.J. Pepler and K.H. Rubin (eds), *Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression* (Hillsdale, N.J., Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> See D. Levison, *Violence in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Newbury Park, CA, Sage Publishers, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> See Pablo Fajnzylber *et al.*, *What causes crime and violence?* (Washington D.C., Office of the Chief Economist, Latin America and the Caribbean, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> Caroline Moser, "Violence in Colombia: building sustainable peace and social capital", in Andres Solimano *et al.* (eds), *Essays on Peace and Development: the Case of Colombia and the International Experience* (Washington D.C., World Bank, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Canada, for example, spends more than 1 billion Canadian dollars on direct costs associated with domestic violence. See Lorraine Greaves, *Selected Estimates of the Cost of Violence Against Women* (Ontario, Center for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, 1995). In 1996 Colombia spent 5% of its GDP on security and criminal justice alone, with expenditure on private security reaching 1.4% of GDP. See Centro de Estudios sobre Desarrollo Economico (CEDE), *Violencia en Colombia, dimensionamiento y políticas de control* [Violence in Colombia: scale of the problem and the policies to control it] (Bogotá, Universidad de los Andes, 1997), pp. 23-25. In El Salvador in 1995 these costs amounted to 6% of GDP. See José Miguel Cruz and Luis Ernesto Romero, *La violencia en El Salvador en los noventa: magnitud, costos y factores posibilitadores* [Violence in El Salvador in the nineties: size, cost and enabling factors] (San Salvador, Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública, Universidad Centroamericana, José Simeón Cañas, 1997).

<sup>19</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 1993: Investing in Health* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> See Morrison *et al.*, "The violent Americas", pp. 110-120.

<sup>21</sup> See Joseph Tulchin and Heather Golding, "Steps to reduce crime and violence", in Fruhling *et al.*, *Crime and Violence in Latin America*, pp. 262-270.

<sup>22</sup> See Paul Chevigny, "The Control of Police Misconduct in the Americas", in Fruhling *et al.*, *Crime and Violence in Latin America*, pp. 45-69.

<sup>23</sup> See Mauricio Duce and Rogelio Pérez Perdomo, "Citizen Security and the Reform of the Justice System in Latin America", in Fruhling *et al.*, *Crime and Violence in Latin America*, pp. 69-91.

<sup>24</sup> See Laura Chinchilla, "Experiences with Citizen Participation in Crime Prevention in Central America", in Fruhling *et al.*, *Crime and Violence in Latin America*, pp. 205-232.

<sup>25</sup> See José Miguel Cruz, "Los factores posibilitadores y las expresiones de la violencia en los noventa" [Enabling factors and expressions of violence in the nineties], *Estudios Centroamericanos*, 588 (October 1997), pp. 977-992.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Lance, *1000 Years for Revenge: International Terrorism and the FBI. The Untold Story* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> A noteworthy example is Fruhling *et al.*, *Crime and Violence in Latin America*. This might well contain the most recent cumulative data on violence in the region.

<sup>28</sup> The author of the present essay is Colombian: leonel@fundacionparalareconciliacion.org

<sup>29</sup> The project was co-ordinated by the Office of the Mayor of Bogotá.

<sup>30</sup> See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 2003), pp. 3ff.

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### ***Multi-Casual Nature of Violence***

#### **Social and economic factors**

Income inequality, history of violence, effectiveness of institutions, availability of weapons and drugs, levels of poverty, social and cultural norms, neighbourhood living conditions, violence in the media.

#### **Domestic factors**

Family size and density, history of violence, types of rules applied in the family, level of poverty.

#### **Individual factors**

Age, sex, education, socio-economic status, employment, drug abuse, history of aggression.

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### ***ANGER, RESENTMENT AND DESIRE FOR REVENGE***

## ***“Ecumenical Prayer for Peace 2004”***

*The heavens, the entire cosmos, the inhabited earth,  
all its peoples, cultures and religions proclaim Your name, Lord.  
In the depths of their human existence it resounds as an unfulfilled desire.  
Your name, Lord, is Life and Peace, Shalom and Salaam.  
You are Father and Mother of all peoples and cultures,  
All have their origins in You.  
All men and women are in Your image.  
All that open themselves to others give witness to You.  
You are the source of all human encounters,  
the origin and end of every search for truth and justice.  
An indestructible hope lives in us: Our Lord and Brother Jesus Christ  
has let us know Your name.  
He promised all, without distinction, life and a future.  
He is our Peace.  
He will break down all barriers (Eph 2:14)  
that keep apart, separate and humiliate.  
His spirit opens doors and hearts.  
He enables encounters.  
He allows confidence to grow. He leads all that seek You in truth  
along the path of a common hope,  
of a common responsibility towards creation and for all life.  
He invites us into a house with many rooms (Jn 14:2).  
Your name, Lord, is Life, Peace, Shalom and Salaam.  
May this Name be known and praised by all.  
With all that know this name we ask Peace, for those that are near and peace  
for those that are afar (Is 57:19).  
Peace in the heart, Peace in all tents, houses and palaces.  
Peace between religions and cultures.  
Peace for creation, which sighs (Rom 8:22).  
Show to all who You are in truth.  
Make us instruments of Your Peace.*

(Ref.: Hermann Schalück, OFM  
*Yours Sincerely*, n. 72, MISSIO)

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### ***Thank you!!!***

The SEDOS Secretariat would like to thank all the Seminar Participants and the Executive Committee for their presence and collaboration during the whole week.

A special thanks goes to our Executive Director, Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP, who was involved for the first time in the organization of the event.

We should also like to express our gratitude to our Speaker and Facilitator, Fr Leonel Narváez Gómez, IMC, and Fr Brian Starcken, CSSp., for helping this Seminar to be successful.

We conclude hoping that this Bulletin has enabled all of you, who could not take part this year, to grasp the spirit that animated the time and work we spent together during those days. We sincerely hope to have you with us next year for the SEDOS Residential Seminar that, as in previous years. It will take place in Ariccia.