



The Way of Peace

Anzac Centenary Edition 1915-2015

#7 Forgiveness and Reconciliation

“If you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother or sister has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”

Matt 5: 23, 24

What could be achieved if we all realise that another future is possible? The state of the world and its communities is at stake. If there is to be a change it must begin with a conversion of each human heart.

There is a crying need and a global yearning today for reconciliation, the healing of broken relationships, the restoration to the oppressed of what was taken from them, respect for the place of everyone and everything.

After war ends, former enemies realise that those they were killing were people with names and families just like themselves.

Jesus is the one who personifies forgiveness and reconciliation: “*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*” He unmasked oppressors, took the side of the suffering, but recognised the humanity of both. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the victim, a Jew, finds himself being cared for by the very person who is supposed to hate him and whom he is expected to fear! This is God’s work, enfleshed in the life and words of Jesus. God reconciles the whole of creation in Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

Reconciliation is a public process of truth-telling and healing.

It brings together not only victims, perpetrators and their families, but also representatives of the local community. Victims tell what was done to them, what they have suffered, and their outrage and loss. Those who oppressed them have the opportunity to take responsibility, show remorse, and say what led them to this offence. Gradually, as people have their say, they move to a new place in their relationship as a community.

As they heal the wounds of division, they seek practical ways of restoring what was broken and compensating loss. **This is what is called “Restorative Justice.”**

We are called as Christians to create communities of hope, nurturing an alternate vision for our world, one based not on the need to blame and punish, but on the free gift of God’s reconciling love. God empowers former victims and offenders to be healers and reconcilers in a broken world. Source: “from Violence to Wholeness”

Prayer for Reconciliation

In the midst of conflict and division, we know it is you who turns our minds and thoughts to peace.

*Your Spirit changes our hearts:
enemies begin to speak to one another, those who
were estranged join hands in friendship,
and nations seek the way of peace together.*

*Let your Spirit be at work in us.
Give us understanding and put an end to strife,
fill us with mercy and overcome our denial,
grant us wisdom and teach us to learn from the
people of the land.*

*Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, adapted from
the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer*

Fact File

- In 1914, Pope Benedict XV made repeated appeals “urging powers to put down their weapons”. Anzac Day originated in 1916 as a civilian initiative under the leadership of Anglican priest, Canon David Garland. Though secular, it was designed as a liturgy of remembrance for those sent into a doomed campaign who fought, suffered and died bravely.
www.bartonbooks.com.au

- The words of a letter written by Turkish leader at the time of Gallipoli, Kamal Attaturk, “to those heroes that shed their blood”, offered a gesture of reconciliation that made possible the friendship between the British Empire (as it was then), including Australia, and Turkey.

- “Black Diggers” is a play that explores the untold stories of Aboriginal soldiers. It is the result of research into the lives and deaths of about a thousand Aboriginal man who went away to fight in WW1.
www.theguardian.com

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in East Timor was a powerful symbol of transformation – it was housed in a former Indonesian prison, built in Portugese times, and funded for renovation by the Japanese (all former invaders).

- The use of Restorative Justice with criminals began in New Zealand in 1989, was adapted by Australian police in 1991, and is used in many Australian states. It is now used in many Australian schools and as a model for resolving family conflict.



Cartoon source: Michael Leunig; www.leunig.com.au

Profile of a Peacemaker



Source: Broken Bay Diocese

Richard Campbell is a gifted artist whose mother was a Gumbaynggirr woman and father a Dunghutti man. At the age of nine, a black car took him and his family from their home in Bowraville to the Macksville courthouse where he was charged with being a neglected child. His family was separated: the boys taken to Kinchela Boys Home, the girls elsewhere. The next period of his life was one of abuse and trouble. When Richard was asked to do a painting connecting the Bible stories with Aboriginal spirituality, he began to explore and remember more of his own Aboriginal spirituality.

Gradually his painting has helped him tell the story of the pain of the losses in his family, the suffering he has endured, the growth in his spiritual journey and to come to a place of forgiveness. He is now painting and telling his story to others, not just for reconciliation for himself but for his brothers and sisters, his aunts and grandparents and the other Aboriginal children and men he shared his youth with in the homes and institutions and for the abuse they suffered.

“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.” Nelson Mandela

Discuss:

What would we say to peacemakers in 1913?

What kind of sacrifice does peacemaking involve?

Where do you see the need for reconciliation in your community?

Useful Links

Centre for Restorative Justice:
www.restorativejustice.com.au

Restorative Practices:
www.maristyc.com.au

Real Justice :
www.realjustice.org

Honest History, Supporting Balanced and Honest History:
www.honesthistory.net.au

“Compassion” asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Henri Nouwen