

# **Justice and Reconciliation**

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## **Introduction**

The second Special Synod for Africa completed its meetings just a little over a month ago. The African Church-Family of God described itself in the documents of the Synod as being “Salt and Light to Africa” in the service of “Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace.” This time immediately after the Synod provides an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the relations between reconciliation, justice, and peace. As some observers have already noted, what has been stated about these three concepts in the Synod—reconciliation, justice, peace—can hardly be gainsaid: they reaffirm the long-standing teaching of the Church. The question is rather how to explore their deeper relationships to one another, on the one hand, and chart out the practical action that should flow from those deeper relationships, on the other.

This presentation is intended to take up both of these tasks, but more the first one—that of our understanding of the relationships between the three—than the second. While we learn to focus our questions to our Tradition by the questions that arise in our praxis, it is only by continuing to explore the connections between reconciliation, justice, and peace within the Tradition that we can hope to keep on course as Christians in our work to create a more just and peaceful world. But it is precisely the kinds of questions that have

arisen in the last twenty years out of our ministry—regarding conflicts within nations rather than between them; the globalization of drug trafficking and sale of small arms; the persistence of poverty; the lingering effects of colonialism; and a growing awareness of the roles and resources of women—that we are coming to clarify the relations between reconciliation, justice and peace.

The two, then—our faith and the experience of our ministry—are closely linked together. What I would like to do here is to examine where I think we have come in these twenty years in that interaction of our faith and our ministry on two of the three concepts mentioned in the title and the deliberations of the Synod; namely, reconciliation and justice. Peace, of course, is immediately implied. Full reconciliation and full peace are in many ways the same thing or at least seem to be. Inasmuch as we have not reached that point of fullness on either count, it is better to focus on the process of getting to that desired goal of a full or genuine reconciliation and peace.

I intend to begin with reconciliation, since this is the place where thinking has been developing most rapidly over the past twenty years. It is also the less understood of the two concepts of reconciliation and justice. I want to begin with some of the confusions about reconciliation, and then move to a more concrete way of thinking about reconciliation. This more concrete way of thinking is not intended primarily to reveal the complexities of the topic, but rather to make it more available for thinking about the shape of ministry for international religious institutes, and for guiding our decisions and our practice. After looking at the confusions, I then want to propose a framework that I

hope will be helpful in guiding our policy and our practice, as well as linking reconciliation more closely to justice.

In the second part of this presentation, I turn then to justice. Justice is so broad and complex a topic that all of the aspects and issues surrounding justice cannot be touched upon here. After some reflections on the relation of justice to reconciliation, I will focus upon three aspects of justice: advocacy, restorative justice, and structural justice. These three all have an intimate connection with the work of reconciliation, and relate also in a special way to the pursuit of justice in the ministry of international religious institutes.

The recent Synod and the continent it celebrated will serve as a general backdrop for what will be presented here. At the same time, it is important to reach more widely as well. But by providing some focus on Africa, we will have the opportunity to look more closely at what concrete action can be taken in the ministry of reconciliation and the pursuit of justice.

## **Reconciliation**

It has now become commonplace to think of reconciliation in terms of *individual* reconciliation and *social* reconciliation. In the words of the Propositions from the Synod (no. 5), in individual reconciliation “God creates a new heart in us and reconciles us with himself and with others.” The definition of social reconciliation in the Propositions is more extensive and is worth quoting here:

Reconciliation on the social level contributes to peace after a conflict, reconciliation restores unity of hearts and life in common. In virtue of reconciliation, nations long at war have again found peace, citizens ruined by civil war have rebuilt unity; individuals or communities seeking or granting pardon have healed their memories; divided families once again live in harmony. Reconciliation overcomes crises, restores dignity to people, and opens the way for development and lasting peace among people at all levels.

Christians believe that all reconciliation comes from God and is ultimately the work of God through Jesus Christ in the world that God has created. The Synod reiterated this point several times in the course of its deliberations, and focused especially upon the Sacrament of Reconciliation (and also the Eucharist) as the enactment and participation in God’s reconciling work. Without keeping this truth in mind, our efforts at reconciliation will always be incomplete and prone to fail. The Propositions note too (no. 9) that reconciliation must be sustained by a spirituality that draws us ever deeper into the mystery of God’s plan for the world. Implicit here is that this spirituality is not only important for individuals but also for our work in common toward reconciliation. I will return to all of this in a moment, after we have had the opportunity to look at some of the confusions around the term “reconciliation” itself.

### ***Confusions about Reconciliation***

Reconciliation is a very central concept in Christianity even though it is not spoken about directly much in the Bible. It has some parallels in other religions, such as the idea of *tikkun olam* (“healing the world”) in Judaism. The confusion arises from its use today in the secular sphere. To be sure, even the Greek word *katallegein* or “reconciliation” in the New Testament came out of the secular sphere. But its contemporary usage in a wide variety of secular circles—political, military, judicial, and social—that has made the concept unwieldy. In many of these instances there is an attempt to distance the term from its Christian and religious origins.<sup>1</sup>

A sampling of these usages might be useful here. I will note six different ways the term is used in political discourse:

- Two parties cease armed conflict and agree to live with differences. That agreement is guaranteed by clear boundaries. The Dayton Accords that created the ethnic enclaves in Bosnia-Herzegovina is an example.
- Two parties expand the social space to permit greater collaboration. The Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland (and especially shared government since 2007) is an example.
- An historical realignment that marks a “return” to a previous condition. The “reunion” of the two German States after the Fall of the Berlin Wall is an example.
- Creating a new, common narrative to overcome divisions of the past. “Racial reconciliation” with Aboriginal peoples in Australia since 2008 is an example.

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<sup>1</sup> For a closer look at the relation between the religious and political meanings of reconciliation, see Ralf K. Wuestenberg, *The Political Dimensions of Reconciliation: A theological Analysis of Ways of Dealing with Guilt during the Transition to Democracy in South Africa and (East) Germany* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

- Establishing social conditions so that the past cannot repeat itself. The Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in Chile and South Africa had this among their stated goals.
- Reaching a point where the past is no longer problematic for the present. The continuing ritual gestures between Germany and France are an example.

One can add to these deliberate misuses of the term. The most common and most egregious occurs when erstwhile oppressors ask for victims to set aside their legitimate grievances so that the nation can “get on with things” and wrongdoers can escape punishment for their deeds. This can poison the very use of the word “reconciliation” as it did for many in Argentina after the “dirty war” there in the 1980s.

“Reconciliation” when used by politicians, military commanders, directors of NGOs, and even religious leaders can be seen to cover a whole range of ideas: from ceasing armed conflict, to limited rapprochement, to commitment to righting some wrongs of the past, to new friendship. As religious people we cannot control the use of the term in the public forum. But we can identify what it seems to mean in its various public usages, and how these relate to our own understanding of reconciliation from a Christian viewpoint. This process of relating and understanding is actually a two-way one. On the one hand, it is about achieving some measure of clarity for ourselves about how reconciliation is used and what we mean by it in relation to those various meanings. On the other hand, it is sharing our insights into reconciliation by translating them into terms that other religious parties and especially also that secular people are able to understand. The most important instance of this translation is going on in the understanding of forgiveness.

Here I want to take a step on this two-way street by suggesting a framework for our understanding of reconciliation as Christians. The intention of this framework is, first of all, to lay out the Christian understandings of reconciliation in a coherent way and then, secondly, use this framework to interpret uses of the term in the public forum.

### ***A Framework for Understanding the Christian Concept of Reconciliation***

I would suggest that the Christian concept of reconciliation needs to be seen in three ways: as source, as process, and as vision or goal.

*Reconciliation as Source.* Reconciliation is for Christians first and foremost the work of God (cf. 2 Cor 5:19). God's work is manifested to us in God's design for an alienated creation, that is being drawn back into deep communion with God's own self through the saving work of Jesus Christ. A glance at documents of the Church expounding the doctrine of reconciliation shows this as the pre-eminent understanding of reconciliation. The saving work of Christ is mediated to us through the sacraments of baptism, Eucharist and Reconciliation. In the Synod Propositions, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is given special standing: its frequent celebration helps convert the human heart toward God, and makes reconciliation in the social sphere more possible. Reconciliation as overcoming offenses against God, then, lies at the heart of Christian reconciliation.

This dimension of reconciliation—its source in God and God's work in Christ—is well articulated in the Church's Tradition. For many people working for social justice today there is sometimes the feeling that the link between personal reconciliation with God to social justice is not well articulated. It is as if the Church's principal contribution to talking about reconciliation lies in the cleansing of individual human hearts. It would

appear to be a vision that, once human hearts are cleansed the rest of the problems of the world will take care of themselves. But our experience seems to speak otherwise. As was articulated to Cardinal Etchegaray's query about the genocide in Rwanda shortly after he arrived there, ethnic blood is thicker than baptismal water. The frequent reception of the sacraments was not enough to keep Catholics from killing each other.

Another way of looking at the source of the doctrine of reconciliation (articles in the Scriptures especially in Rom 5:1-11, 2 Cor 5:17-20, and Eph 2:12-20) is to see sacramental participation, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as our way of maintaining that deep communion with God, who is the author of reconciliation in our world, that is necessary to make our work in reconciliation efficacious. Reconciliation is about more than ideas and objectives; it is about practices. The healing of hearts and minds is more than a cognitive change; it involves our bodies as well. Without these practices—sacramental and non-sacramental (the Synod Propositions speak of both)—we will not be able to be sustained in the work of reconciliation. Put in a way that our secular collaborators might understand: working for reconciliation takes more than good intentions and commitment. It is about deep change in all the parties involved. And key to that deep change is that it cannot come about if we all stay as we are and have been. We must find a source that is larger than ourselves, both to sustain our motivation and also open us up to new possibilities. The work of reconciliation often comes up against an impasse or our getting “stuck”—unable to see alternatives. It is not as linear as our projects might lead us to believe. Ritual practices help de-center ourselves, allowing us to move out of the present time, either into the past (memory) or the future (hope).

Reconciliation involves more than getting the program right. Our capacity to see what has been overlooked, to celebrate the small victory, to take risks are all part of the process. We each—be we religious or secular—must find the spiritual resources to sustain us in this most difficult work.

*Reconciliation as Process.* We often focus our reconciliation so much on the desired goal or outcome that we forget that most of the work of reconciliation goes on in a process. “Process” may be too tidy a word for what happens, since it may connote for some that a clear, rational, and linear program may be set up. That is not what I mean here. Rather, reconciliation always involves actions, practices, course corrections, and limited objectives that feed into a larger process. The image here is less of a river flowing with a single, coordinated current than eddies of water making their way through a delta.

But there are definable actions and practices nonetheless. Some of the names of these actions and practices include: building communication and trust across boundaries, negotiation, mediation, truth-telling, the pursuit of justice, healing of memories, rebuilding physical infrastructure and human relationships, and forgiveness. Our work of reconciliation (somewhat in distinction from God’s) happens mainly in reconciliation as process. These actions of communication, accompaniment, and actions that change relationships of all kinds are not separate from reconciliation: they are the very “stuff” of reconciliation itself. To think of reconciliation only as a goal implies we can jump over the hard work of healing the world. It is a very disembodied view of how God acts in the world. Hence, reconciliation as understood by Christians is not about fortifying ourselves with the sacraments and then going out and doing good or pursuing justice. That “going

out”, that sense of mission is an inseparable part of our participating in the Holy Trinity’s mission in the world. The sacraments do not stop at the conclusion of the ritual or at the church door, so to speak. As we shall see, justice is not something separate from reconciliation; indeed it cannot really be separated from reconciliation at all.

In our collaboration with those of other faiths or with secular commitments, we can share most completely in discrete acts of reconciliation, such as projects for development or justice. Key to our understanding that needs to be communicated to others is that projects may contribute to reconciliation, but they must always be set in a larger whole. This is especially the case in working with the projects of NGOs, since the contour and thrust of those projects may be determined by what is fundable and on short-term, immediate effect. But then NGOs leave the field, and the work of reconciliation still needs to continue.

*Reconciliation as Goal.* What has been said thus far about reconciliation as source and reconciliation as process was intended to delimit considerably how we think about reconciliation in general. Most typically, reconciliation for most people connotes an end-state of peace (or at least absence of conflict) where the past no longer determines the present and the future. This remains a good description of the goal of reconciliation, although we know that, in practice, such reconciliation is rarely if ever attained. So focus on reconciliation as process is necessary. At the same time, however, we need a horizon upon which to fix our gaze. In view of that, it seems to me that considering reconciliation as goal entails three things for us as Christians.

First of all, we must constantly remind ourselves that God is the author and the endpoint of reconciliation. Ultimately it is not about us—what we do or what we can imagine for the future. The practices that keep us in touch with God as the source of reconciliation are needed equally to sustain us in reconciliation work. Put simply, we have to find the hope that draws us into the future that God has imagined. Hope comes from God, and an ever-deepening reliance upon God is essential for living in that hope.

Second, we must discover and celebrate the small victories along the way. We sometimes find ourselves in situations where there may well be no great victories. But there will be small ones. Being able to discover them and then acknowledge and celebrate them is a way of resisting despair. It is discerning the traces of God in our midst. Discovering them reminds us not only of the nearness of God in places where God can seem completely absent; it also reminds us that perhaps the most important things happening are not done by us, but are part of a larger reality in which we participate. Celebration is ritually based, that is, we have set ways of celebrating that let us know we are celebrating rather than mourning. Ritual allows us to come into touch with past, but also feel the future reaching out to us.

Third, in seeing reconciliation as a goal, we attend especially to what is happening with the next generation. Experience teaches that people who go through profound dislocation and trauma as adults are often not able—at least collectively—to find complete reconciliation. It will be left to their children—to those who want to remain faithful to the experience of their parents but also need to find a way to live differently in the future. Youth are a special vehicle of God's grace. Our commitment to reconciliation as goal

entails commitment and care for the future. That means not only involving youth in reconciliation processes, but attending especially to what they see and hear, and walking with them (or perhaps better, following them) into that future.

Finding hope, celebrating small victories, and attending to the next generation are all things that those of other faiths and those who are secular are things that can be understood, even as they are pursued in different ways.

To conclude this first part: to see reconciliation within a framework of source, process and goal or vision can help us sort through what those around us may be calling reconciliation. It is not a matter of correcting their language or use. It is more about being able to situate their intentions and efforts in a more coherent picture of what is happening. It also helps us relate what we are trying to do more effectively with what they are doing.

## **Justice**

In Proposition 14 the Bishops of the Synod take up the issue of justice. They trace how justice is rooted in the very being of God in the Hebrew Scriptures and how, for us as Christians, our justification in Christ (cf. Rom 5) allows us to look for “the restoration of justice and the just demands of relationships.” As justified in Christ, we are called to be “architects of just structures in our society, in the light of the Justice that comes from God.”

The Propositions go on to address social justice and the eradication of poverty (no. 17) and call for establishing an African Peace and Solidarity Initiative to deal with conflict resolution and the rebuilding of societies (no. 21).

Explicit presentation of justice is far more frequent in the Bible in both Testaments than discussion of reconciliation as such. With this and the elaboration on justice in the Church's Social Teaching, there are too many aspects of justice to be taken up in any satisfactory way here. I wish to limit myself in this presentation to just three aspects of justice that bear a special relationship to the theme of reconciliation. By limiting myself to three, I am of course immediately admitting that there are many more. My hope is that, by looking at just these three one can get an idea of how others are linked to reconciliation as well. As already mentioned in the introduction, those three are: advocacy, restorative justice, and the pursuit of structural justice.

But for moving to those three, a different matter needs a brief presentation; namely, the relationship of justice to reconciliation. Put simply, which comes first: justice or reconciliation?

***Justice and Reconciliation or Reconciliation and Justice?***

The subtitle of the recent Synod spoke of “reconciliation, justice and peace.” The Propositions presented to the Holy Father at the conclusion of the Synod treat the three themes in the same order. Can—or should—one speak of reconciliation before justice, or must there be justice before there can be talk of reconciliation?

To speak of reconciliation before justice would seem to some to play down the importance of doing justice. It would seem to come perilously close to, if not succumbing to, a false reconciliation that does not take the suffering of victims seriously. Reconciliation at the cost of impunity for wrongdoers immediately comes to mind. Reconciliation at such a price, most would say, is too costly.

In a less extreme manner, talk of reconciliation before complete justice is done seems to short-circuit the process of justice itself. Hence one can hear in statements from the World Council of Churches of a decade or two ago that there can be no reconciliation until there is justice.

These are legitimate objections to placing reconciliation before justice. If reconciliation means bypassing or even short-circuiting justice, then neither reconciliation nor justice comes about. I have already noted that the transition from personal or individual reconciliation to social reconciliation—where much of the work of social justice is located—is not as clearly developed in Church Teaching as we might hope for. So is putting reconciliation before justice not possibly perpetuating this lack of development? What just should be said about the relation of justice to reconciliation?

Two points can be made here. First of all, the intention of the positioning of the two concepts in the Synod's documents seems to me to be saying that reconciliation is the larger category into which justice is to be placed. Reconciliation is about God's cosmic plan and the Paschal Mystery unfolding within it. Justice is not a separate theme from reconciliation (as in: first justice, then reconciliation), but is rather a constituent part of the larger plan of reconciliation. Justice, as understood in Catholic Tradition, bears many of the same configurations as reconciliation: it begins and ends in God who is Justice itself. As Pope John Paul II put it in his 2002 Message for the World Day of Peace, the pillars of reconciliation are justice and forgiveness. Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate* sees charity as the completion of justice (CV, 6). Justice is about proper relationships and the right order of things. Full reconciliation, when "God will be

all in all” (1 Cor 15:28) is the more comprehensive category. Justice is a necessary step in our arriving at the end point of full reconciliation. That end point cannot be reached by either bypassing, short-circuiting or foreclosing on justice. But justice is not the end point in itself.

Second, an objection to speaking of reconciliation before complete justice identifies reconciliation with only one part of the three-part framework I presented here earlier. It assumes that reconciliation is only an end point. As I tried to say, reconciliation is also the process of getting to that end point, which is unavoidably and unabashedly identified with the works of justice. To say that there can be no reconciliation before there is complete justice unduly narrows reconciliation to but one of three of its dimensions.

So to my mind, it is possible and probably even necessary to speak of reconciliation before speaking of justice—not because one (reconciliation) happens before the other (justice). They are both part of a larger process. A vision of Christian reconciliation without recourse to justice would mean that we do not take the suffering of victims seriously. A view of justice without reconciliation can narrow justice to retribution or even mistake it for vengeance.

But can there be reconciliation without complete justice? We know that there never is complete justice in this world. We cannot bring back the dead. We can never completely rebuild what has been destroyed. We cannot recover completely what has been lost. Yet that cannot keep us from experiencing some measure of reconciliation (the victories small and large of reconciliation as goal or vision), and predisposing us to being able to experience even more reconciliation through, among other things, acts of forgiveness. To

say that no reconciliation can happen until there is complete justice keeps us in a certain state of paralysis and harms, in the long run, our pursuit of justice itself.

The pursuit of justice, then, is part of reconciliation as process. Its achievement—in whatever measure—is the anticipation of the experience of full reconciliation of all things in Christ (cf. Col 1:19-20).

### *Advocacy*

I would like to turn now to three selected areas of a ministry of social justice as they pertain to reconciliation. The first of these is advocacy. This has been an important dimension of social justice ministry for international religious institutes. The networks of communication that we have because of our transnational extension throughout the world—from sites of the poor to centers of power—help magnify our voices in pointing to injustices and advocating for redress, restoration, and liberation. The coalitions that can be formed among us at places such as SEDOS here in Rome, or among institutes in NGOs accredited to the United Nations like Franciscans International or that of the Sisters of Mercy all point to important channels of advocacy that have been developed. Closer to the ground, the support that religious institutes have given to local initiatives is indeed impressive.

Can advocacy work be considered part of the work of reconciliation? It might seem at first sight to be a prelude to reconciliation rather than part of it. But if looked at again within the three-part framework that has been elaborated here, advocacy is definitely part of reconciliation as process. Advocacy is part of two dimensions of the work of reconciliation: recognition and witness.

Recognition has to do with putting a face on, giving a voice to, and acknowledging the presence of victims. All of these—face, voice, and acknowledged presence—restore humanity to victims, individually and collectively. It allows them to be subjects or protagonists of their own history. Advocacy as speaking on behalf of others is not a paternalistic gesture, but rather is making a space for others in the public forum where they may be seen, heard and accepted as fellow human beings who suffer. Recognition is essential to the reconciliation process; without it victims are not addressed and engaged as creatures made in the image and likeness of God, the theological basis for a doctrine of human rights. As some authors have put it (at least using the English word “recognition”), we are doing three things. First of all, in recognizing, we acknowledge presence and allow the victim to speak; second, we “recognize” in the sense of seeing something familiar: another human being like ourselves; and third, we have to re-think (“re-cognize”) the world in which all of this has taken place.<sup>2</sup>

Second, advocacy is about testimony or witness. In the reconciliation process, witness is part of the process of truth-telling that makes the proper pursuit of justice possible. We have seen the importance of this in Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, and other projects such as the REMHI (Recuperación de la memoria histórica) Project in Guatemala. Witness challenges the narrative of wrongdoers that presents itself as the truth about the past. It opens up an alternate space where a different kind of future can be imagined. The accompaniment of victims in processes of witness and truth-telling has

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<sup>2</sup> Erin Daly and Jeremy Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 156-57.

been an important part of a ministry of justice and is now considered an essential part of reconciliation processes. Witness changes the flow of history.

### ***Restorative Justice***

The Restorative Justice movement focuses upon the healing of victims rather than on the punishment of wrongdoers. It grew out of practices of native peoples in New Zealand and North America and was first used in the criminal court systems in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. It aims at healing relationships between victims and wrongdoers, and making apology and forgiveness possible. It is now being used in a wide range of situations, including after civil conflict.<sup>3</sup> It has been taken up in projects by religious institutes, such as the Africa Restorative Justice Project now being carried out by the Africa Faith and Justice Network.

Retributive or punitive justice focuses upon the punishment of the wrongdoer, which is the prerogative of the legitimate state apparatus or other duly constituted authority. A ministry of social justice can be related to such a form of justice, at least indirectly, for the sake of getting an acknowledgement of wrongdoing and providing some mode of redress for victims. Restorative justice focuses upon the plight of the victim, and the relationship between victim and wrongdoer. It goes a step further than traditional distributive justice (by focusing upon the redistribution of goods available) by its focus on relationships between individuals and among communities, and by providing all that is needed to bring about restoration of such relationships. While focusing on victims in the

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<sup>3</sup> A good overview can be found in Dennis Sullivan and Larry Triffitt (eds.), *Handbook of Restorative Justice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008). See especially Section V: "Gross human rights violations and transitional justice" (pp. 337-434).

first instance, it does not leave the wrongdoer outside its purview. The prison ministry that the Rwandan Sister Genevieve Uwamariya reported upon in her intervention at the Synod is testimony about how restorative justice can work among wrongdoers. The care taken for wrongdoers, even as they are sequestered in incarceration or for repentance, is part of restorative justice.

I bring up restorative justice here because, as a process within reconciliation, it is so suited to the work of international religious institutes as a work of justice and as a work of reconciliation. Much of what is done by religious institutes in post-conflict situations—such as the repatriation of displaced persons and of refugees, or the rebuilding of social and physical infrastructure that has been destroyed (I think here of your “Solidarity with Southern Sudan” Project)—constitute practices of restorative justice. What I am proposing here is to see that work not only as a work of justice, but also as work that leads to the healing and rebuilding of relationships that will make a different kind of society possible in the future. Justice seen in this way becomes more than discrete projects to be initiated and carried out. The very pursuit of justice itself becomes a practice of reconciliation that can strengthen a community’s way of acting and seeing itself far into the future.

### ***Structural Justice***

One of the most widely used definitions of social reconciliation is “the reconstruction of society so that the wrongdoing of the past can never happen again.” It is an approach that lies behind the cry of “*nunca más*” that reverberated through Latin America after the end of the National Security States there.

To create those conditions that will keep wrongdoing from recurring requires a commitment to pursuing structural justice, that is, discovering, naming, and then dismantling those social structures that perpetuate injustice. As religious institutes, we can be the voice for structural justice, even though we may not have the direct means of bringing it about. However, in places that are majority Catholic, or where the Church is considered a trustworthy institution when many of the institutions of civil society are not, religious institutes may have a stronger hand in this. Because of the historical involvement in education and healthcare, religious institutes have these as special avenues for promoting structural justice as the framework for social reconciliation.

### **Conclusion: Architects of Justice and Reconciliation**

In this presentation, I have tried to explore the relationships between justice and reconciliation, talking about the misconceptions and the misuses of the terms in relation to one another. I have tried to propose a larger framework in which to look at reconciliation, and especially how to situate some of the secular usages of this originally religious concept. I have singled out three practices of justice to show how they relate to the larger process of reconciliation. In conclusion, I would like to turn to you, as the general administrations of international religious institutes, and to those entrusted especially with ministries of justice and peace, to reflect on your role within all of this.

As people who have been given the task of leadership of international religious institutes, you are important players in the ministry of justice and reconciliation within the Church. Your travels put you in touch with an array of issues and circumstances that surround the pursuit of justice and the ministry of reconciliation in a way that few others

have access to. It is important that you are able to think clearly about your responsibilities for working for justice and reconciliation, and the human resources you can bring to bear upon suffering today. The thinking about reconciliation in the past two decades has been shifting from an almost exclusive focus upon wrongdoers to accompanying the victims (without, of course, neglecting wrongdoers)—at least in humanitarian and religious circles. How you craft the policies that guide your apostolates, how you form and provide for the care of your members, and how you offer a spirituality to motive and sustain your members in this often arduous work put you in a special position. Like few others, you are the “architects” of social justice and reconciliation of which the Synod speaks. Your reach is beyond any diocese or any bishops’ conference. I hope what we are saying and doing together here today will help clarify your own way forward, and strengthen your commitment of working toward that day when, indeed, God will “be all in all.”