



Office of the Vice President for Mission

TO: The Gonzaga Community
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Reconciliation and World Peace

For many years, Pope Paul VI's dictum on peace could be seen on posters, postcards, and even an occasional fence post: "If you want peace, work for justice!" Wise and prophetic words for his time that caught the public fancy! Later on John Paul II took this statement a step farther: "If you want peace, work for justice; and if you want justice, work for reconciliation."

Catholics associate the word reconciliation with the sacrament of reconciliation, or what was once called the sacrament of penance. Reconciliation is for us synonymous with forgiveness of our sins. But reconciliation, it seems to me, goes beyond forgiveness to the restoration of relationships. I can forgive someone but then say to myself "I hope I never have to deal with that so-and-so again." Even in the sacrament of reconciliation more takes place than simple forgiveness; our relationship with our loving creator is once again restored and made strong.

So when John Paul II said that if we want justice we need to work for reconciliation, he meant that, beyond forgiveness of past offenses, we need to work to restore relationships among individuals and among nations. We need to work to restore or build relations of mutual trust, dialog, community, dare we say it, love.

This is as true among nations as it is between and among individuals. The phenomenon of globalization has expanded the challenge and opportunity of reconciliation to which John Paul II called our world. No longer are relationships of mutual tolerance, arms-length armistices, and blithe, live-and-let-live disinterest going to be sufficient to promote the justice that lies at the heart of God's Kingdom. And without that justice of God's Kingdom, as Pope Paul said, we cannot hope for world peace.

The Society of Jesus at its 35th General Congregation in 2008 wrote in its mission decree that in our globalized world we Jesuits will commit ourselves to the ministry of reconciliation – reconciliation of individual's relationships with God, with other people, and with creation. If any one of these three-part relationships is ruptured, we believe, the other two are radically affected. We can no longer speak of social justice without a consideration of environmental justice; nor, to paraphrase St. John, can we say we love God if we hate our neighbor; nor can our relationship with our environment ignore our relations with others and with God.

Lent is a wonderful time for reflection on who we are, with whom we live, and where all of us together are going. Let us keep one another in prayer these days!