

THEOLOGY OF RECONCILIATION AND PEACEMAKING FOR MISSION

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Lecture 2

THE SPIRITUALITY OF RECONCILIATION AND PEACEMAKING TODAY

Spirituality in Reconciliation and Peacemaking

When most people think about the concept of reconciliation, either on the individual or the social level, they are likely to expect a discussion of techniques of conflict transformation. There is, of course, an entire body of literature on conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict transformation, much of which can be useful to the missionary.¹ Indeed, some of the findings and methods developed in this area will be discussed in the next lecture. While these have their legitimate place in the work of reconciliation and peacemaking, I wish to focus on here is the role of a supportive spirituality for those who, as missionaries, work within a paradigm of reconciliation. I do this for two reasons. First of all, there is a greater interest in spirituality in the work of reconciliation and peacemaking today as a whole. One of the things which became evident in the 1990s, as interest in reconciliation began to grow, was that the burnout rate among those involved in reconciliation work was extremely high. The task of conflict transformation is arduous, and fails perhaps most of the time. It is always a lengthy process, demanding focus and commitment on the part of those involved. As this became clearer, many conflict resolution workers in secular non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began turning to their religious counterparts, especially in relief and development agencies, expecting to find some help from their spiritual traditions. Unfortunately, workers in those agencies had been caught unawares of the need to engage in reconciliation work as everyone else. They had often no more idea on how to draw on their spiritual traditions than anyone else. In the last six or eight years, a great deal more effort has been put by these agencies to

¹ Two examples which are relevant to missionary work would be Carolyn Shrock-Shenk (ed.), *Mediation and Facilitation Training Manual. Foundations and Skills for Constructive Conflict Transformation* (Akron, PA: Mennonite Conciliation Service, 2000); *Peacebuilding: A Caritas Training Manual* (Vatican City: Caritas Internationalis, 2002).

discovering spiritual roots which can nourish this important but arduous work. Some experts in conflict resolution have themselves written about religious motivations for their work.²

Second, the focus here will be on the distinctive contributions made by missionaries (or one may want to broaden it to religious workers in general³) in situations of reconciliation and peacemaking. What missionaries do as missionaries is of central interest. Thus the spirituality must conform in some way to the theology of reconciliation out of which missionaries work.

This presentation will be structured as follows. It begins with a brief description of what is meant here by “spirituality,” since this is a term that, until recently, was used mainly in Roman Catholic and Orthodox circles. Then a number of elements distinctive to this spirituality will be discussed. The elements presented here do not constitute the entirety of what such a missionary spirituality ought to be, since a spirituality flowing out of this paradigm of mission is still in the developing stages. Finally, an example of how this spirituality might be developed further will be presented, to show its links both to Scripture and to the theology of reconciliation set out in the previous presentation.

A Note on Spirituality

“Spirituality” is a term that, until recently, was used mainly in Roman Catholic and Orthodox circles. For many Protestants, it was even somewhat suspect as a Christian practice altogether. Spirituality seemed to be a certain set of practices one followed in obedience to some human authority, thereby restricting the freedom of the individual Christian. For many Roman Catholics too, it was seen as a set of prescribed, church-approved practices, connected with religious orders. Thus, one could speak of Franciscan or Carmelite spirituality, ways of living out the imperatives of the Gospel in those religious families.

But in recent years, the understanding of spirituality has broadened, both theologically and culturally. A number of works have appeared over the past several decades on missionary spirituality, i.e., specific forms of Christian discipleship connected with missionary activity.⁴ The entry of south and east Asian religious traditions, such as Buddhism, into Western societies had a effect on the use of the term as well. In those instances, spirituality was often seen as a more apt word to use than theology, since the only purpose of doctrines or ideas are intended only as a springboard to enlightenment. The development of practices of nonviolence led also to speaking of a spirituality as the ideas which informed such an approach to violence.

Most recently, “spirituality” has come to mean interest in the transcendent without commitment to any organized religious tradition. The phrase “I am spiritual, but not religious” echoes this attitude. While this will not be the

² John Paul Lederach, *The Journey toward Reconciliation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999).

³ For the latter, see Mary Ann Cejka and Thomas Bamat (eds.), *Artisans of Peace: Grassroots Peacemaking among Christian Communities* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003).

⁴ E.g., Michael Reilly, *Spirituality for Mission: Historical, Theological, and Cultural Factors for a Present-day Missionary Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978); Anthony Gittins, *Reading the Clouds. Mission Spirituality for New Times* (Ligouri, MO: Ligouria Publications, 2000).

meaning of spirituality as it is presented here, such usage has made the term “spirituality” more acceptable, at least in that part of the world.

What then do I mean by spirituality? I would define it for our purposes here as a distinctive and coherent set of ideas, attitudes, and practices which represent a way of living out the Gospel message. In terms of a spirituality of reconciliation, this would mean taking the theology of reconciliation as discussed in the previous presentation and translating it into a way of life and action for missionaries today. Looking back to some of the other paradigms of mission, with their attendant spirituality, might help clarify this.

In the medieval theology of mission, based on Luke 14:23 (“make them come in”), the parable of the wedding banquet, in which the host sends out his servants to bring in people from the highways and byways suggested a spirituality of reaching out to those living in ignorance of the Gospel, and bringing them in to the Church. In the theology of mission based on the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), the spirituality suggested was of someone going out from his or her homeland, and boldly proclaiming the Gospel. There was in this an image of missionary as hero or missionary as martyr, because of the hardships and opposition the missionary was likely to encounter. The theology of mission based on Luke 4 or Luke 24 in the second half of the twentieth century see the missionary as prophet (Luke 4) or as one who accompanies people on a journey.

If 2 Cor 5 and Ephesians 2 provide the biblical warrant for mission as reconciliation, then the missionary spirituality flowing from them bespeaks the missionary as one who overcomes alienation and is a peacebuilder. Bringing together what has been separated, healing memories of the past, and building a new city would be salient images here. To see how to move the theology of mission as reconciliation into a spirituality of reconciliation, we turn now to some of the ideas, images, and practices of such a spirituality.

Ideas and Images of a Spirituality of Reconciliation as Mission

In spirituality, ideas and images often merge. This should not be surprising, inasmuch as spirituality has to do with how to live out a particular Gospel ideal. I would like to explore one such convergence of an idea and image that has become important to articulating a spirituality of reconciliation as mission; namely, that of wounds.

When one thinks of the consequences of events that have forever changed the lives of individuals and societies in a negative fashion, the idea of wounds comes readily to mind. A wound is not only a testimony to the fact of something wrong having happened. Its perduring character as wound or as scar witnesses to the role of memory in the process of trauma and recovery. A wound is often something which never entirely heals. It is a sign of a permanent change that has come about in the life of an individual and a society. Old wounds sometimes resonate with changes taking place in an environment, or with cognate wounds. Think, for example, of how a bone once broken will detect changes in the weather, or leap to awareness when we encounter other kinds of brokenness.

Wounds have a double significance in a spirituality of reconciliation. There are, first of all, the wounds of the victim, be that an individual or a society. They may gradually heal over time, leaving only a scar as a reminder of what has happened in the past. Or they may remain open, continuing to fester and to plague the ones who bear them. We certainly see the latter happening with both individuals and societies. Over generations a wound may heal. Or they may serve as a constant reminder of what happened in the past, as though it was yesterday. For example, in 1989 Slobodan Milosevic recalled to the Serbian people the battle of the Field of the Black Birds six hundred years previously, in which the Orthodox Serbs were defeated by the Ottoman Turks. The memory was salient enough to plunge the Balkans into war for the next six years. Memory of the medieval Crusades among Orthodox Christians and Muslims, the genocide of the Armenians by the Greeks early in the twentieth century, of the Jewish Holocaust more than a half century ago function for other groups in the same way today. Memories can leap back to us as though the events were yesterday.

Wounds remind us that our lives have been altered forever. They reconstitute the past in the present, and can reorient our memories, placing the traumatic events of that past at the very center of memory.

Wounds unattended to and allowed to fester can poison subsequent events. Too often have we seen how wounded individuals and societies go from being victims to themselves becoming perpetrators of wrongdoing toward others. One of the most difficult things to sort out in long-running civil wars is who is the victim and who is the perpetrator, since over time, the parties to the conflict have become both. Both claim their own victimhood as a warrant to inflict violence on the other party. Sometimes this happens in an overt manner that is unmistakable. In other instances it is harder to detect. I am thinking of situations where, after the ending of harsh oppression or totalitarian rule, a liberated society will turn to lawlessness and anarchy. Here unacknowledged wounds lead to the inflicting of new wounds on oneself or on one's society.

Secondly, there are the wounds carried by those seeking reconciliation. The wounds of individual victims or of victim societies cause a resonance to be set up in the wounds of those who would seek to bring about some resolution of these traumas. This is an area of woundedness that often does not receive the attention it deserves. The woundedness of the would-be healer has both positive and negative dimensions. From a positive point of view, a once-wounded healer can have a capacity for empathy with the victim that is not possible for the rest of us. Such a healer can enter the universe of pain and suffering that the victim is experiencing in a unique way. Such a healer can accompany the victim toward recovery in ways unknown to the rest of us. This is often most evident in the case of one-time victims, now healed, who as part of their healing receive a call or vocation to accompany others who have suffered similar traumas in the long and difficult path to recovery.

But the woundedness of the healer can have negative consequences as well. If the healer does not acknowledge the presence of his or her own wounds, either through inattention or denial, the healer's wounds can get in the way of

helping others to overcome a painful past. This can happen in a number of different ways. Unacknowledged wounds can precipitate a victim into altruistic behavior as a way of atoning for the wounds of the past. This can include not only a sense of “needing to be needed,” but also an unwillingness to allow the person they are purporting to help to actually achieve any healing, lest the victim might no longer need the healer at all. The wounds of a healer can become a “hot button” (to use the American idiom) that, once pushed, simply gets in the way of a healing process. The healing process is diverted away from the victim and refocused upon the healer. Thirdly, the wounds of the healer may cause the healer to take undue risks, endangering both the healer and the victim.

I bring this potential problem up because it is not uncommon among missionaries. Sometimes they have gone out of their homeland in an attempt to escape their wounds, or prove something to themselves or to God. They may overcompensate in frenetic activity to prove to themselves that they are not wounded, or as some kind of reparation for the guilt of being wounded to God. I will return to a discussion of this in the next presentation.

Another potential negative consequence of unacknowledged wounds, especially in the case of efforts to heal wounded societies, is that wounds as vulnerable points in oneself can become the object of being assaulted in new ways. When one is confronted with the heinous conditions of genocide or mass killings, the deliberate maiming of individuals, the use of rape as a military strategy, one is, to so speak, staring evil directly in the face. Trying to undo the consequences of such evil can be construed as a kind of combat, a wrestling with evil incarnate. Whether one accepts a view of evil as personified in a figure such as Satan or not, the struggle against evil can engage all our powers, including our own personhood. The struggle can diminish our own humanity. (The psychological term for this is experiencing secondary trauma, that is, taking on unconsciously aspects of the trauma of the victims we are trying to help.) I have seen individuals who have not attended to their own wounds from the past who, in the midst of work for reconciliation, have begun to engage in questionable and even wrong behaviors that they themselves would otherwise stoop to doing. To put it in a perhaps oversimple way: if you don't protect yourself in struggling with evil, evil will attack your own wounds and “get” you.

To this point, the discussion of wounds may seem to have been primarily psychological or sociological. One might ask what this has to do with spirituality. Let me turn to that more explicitly now. One of the elements of a theology of reconciliation articulated in the previous presentation was that we cope with our suffering by placing the story of our suffering in that of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. Here is where what might be termed a psychology of woundedness meets theology: we place our wounds within the wounds of the tortured, crucified, and now risen, Christ. A biblical reference point here is John 20:19-29. In this story, Jesus presents himself to his disciples. Entering through a locked door, he appears in their midst and shows them his wounds. Exegetes have often interpreted this as a way of assuring the disciples that it is indeed Jesus of Nazareth who they are encountering. There is another reading of this act possible. Jesus appears in his glorified, resurrected body. The nature of this appearance is such (as we read from other

accounts of the appearances in the Gospels) that the disciples do not recognize the appearance as Jesus, at least initially. Yet the phenomenon of the glorified body, signifying the transforming power of the resurrection, carries with it a profound paradox. This glorified body is capable of feats not possible for an earthly body, such as walking through locked doors. Yet this same transformed, glorified body still bears the signs of Jesus' execution and death—the wounds in his hands and in his side. Would not one presume that such ugly signs of the past would be erased in the act of transformation? Yet they are still plainly there on Jesus' body.

Perhaps these wounds should be understood in the manner in which wounds have been discussed here: namely, that the wounds of the past can never be entirely erased. We carry with us the memory of their pain because they signify how our lives have been irrevocably altered. Jesus may have been raised from death, but he still bears his earthly story of having been betrayed, arrested, tortured, and put to death. The wounds still present on his glorified body are eternal testimonies of that.

As wounds, these wounds on Jesus' glorified body carry with them a profound ambivalence. They can, on the one hand, be a burden that weighs us down as we go into the future. They have draw us back into the suffering they signify and never allow us to come completely free of them. But on the other hand they can be a source of healing for others. And that is how they function in this particular story. They convince the disciples gathered in the upper room that the phenomenon they are seeing is indeed the Lord. Later on in the same story they heal Thomas. Thomas had been absent when Jesus first appeared to the disciples. The author of the Gospel of John focuses upon Thomas' incredulity when confronted with the story that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Again, another reading is possible. Perhaps Thomas felt excluded, left out because of not having been present at such a marvelous event. When Jesus confronts Thomas, Jesus invites him to touch Jesus' wounds—indeed, to enter them. Jesus' wounds become the means of reconnecting Thomas with Jesus, with the disciples, and even with himself. To echo another part of Scripture, “by his wounds we are healed” (1 Peter 2:24; Is 53:4).

By placing our wounds within the wounds of Jesus, by connecting our story with the story we can allow our wounds to become redemptive for others. This is phrased somewhat different in the Letter to the Philippians (3:10), where the author speaks of being patterned into Christ's death, so that he might come to know the power of the resurrection.

A spirituality of reconciliation finds its salience in attending to wounds: the wounds of victims, the wounds of those working for healing, and the wounds of Christ. I will return to this idea in the third section of this presentation.

Practices of a Spirituality of Reconciliation as Mission

In this second section, I would like to turn to two practices that are part of a spirituality of reconciliation as mission: the place of contemplative prayer, and the creation of spaces of safety and hospitality.

Contemplative prayer might seem to be a practice that is at odds with being a missionary. Missionaries are, for the most part, incurable activists. They do indeed pray, but their prayer is more likely to be directed toward praise and

thanksgiving, or to petition God for certain things. Why contemplative prayer? There are three reasons for making this suggestion.

First of all, contemplative prayer is intrinsically connected with the theology of reconciliation articulated in the first presentation. The cardinal point of this theology is that reconciliation is first and foremost the work of God, and we human beings are but agents of that reconciliation. For us to be faithful and effective agents of God's reconciliation we must take care to be in contact with God. Contemplative prayer seems especially suited to that. In contemplative prayer we find ourselves not taking the initiating or active role, but rather find ourselves waiting on God to speak to us. Such a role reminds us that we are but vehicles for God's reconciling action. We must be conformed to God if we are to be God's agents, "ambassadors for Christ's sake." (2 Cor 5:20) The waiting on God creates within us the stillness wherein we become capable of hearing God speak to us. Otherwise God's word to us runs the risk of being crowded out by our many words.

This waiting on God has other functions within a spirituality of reconciliation. The work of reconciliation takes great patience. When working with individuals, we must be prepared to hear the victim's story over and over again. Victims often need to tell that story of trauma, pain, and loss so many times in order to gain new perspective on it. Those involved in the work of reconciliation are called to accompany victims in that quest. For the most part that involves listening attentively and waiting until the telling of the story takes an unexpected turn. In situations of social reconciliation, patience is needed because the repair to a society takes a long time; it usually takes more than a generation before some measure of reconciliation is achieved. Again, this takes patience on the part of those involved in the reconciliation process.

This waiting which is cultivated in contemplative prayer has yet another function as well. Anyone who has practiced contemplative prayer knows that our waiting on God to speak is not rewarded every time with a word. Sometime the waiting ends in waiting. One ends up experiencing, as it were, the absence of God. But experiencing this absence is of great value for the work of reconciliation. I have encountered on many occasions stories of those who have been tortured. One of the purposes of torture in its modern usage is to make the victim feel utterly alone. A refrain from torturers frequently recounted by victims is: "Scream as loud as you want. No one can hear you." I have encountered especially many people of deep faith who have said they always had believed that God would be with them, no matter what happened. But at the worst moments of torture, God was not there. All they experienced was a profound absence. Our waiting without hearing a word from God in contemplative prayer allows us, in some analogous fashion, to experience that troubling absence which victims can experience.

But the contemplative mode has other functions in a spirituality of reconciliation. Besides learning to waiting on God, a contemplative posture makes it possible for us to contemplate our own wounds, to gaze upon them in unblinking fashion. We tend to want to avert our eyes from our wounds. Re-viewing our wounds reminds us of the pain of the

past; it calls once again to our attention our weakness, our incompleteness, literally our vulnerability. But as has already been noted, not to attend to our wounds makes us susceptible to blocking the way for reconciliation rather than facilitating it. Moreover, we can continue to learn from our wounds, as difficult as that may be. Encounters with new situations can bring with them new perspectives not only on the process of reconciliation, but also to the roles our own wounds can play in making reconciliation possible. Growing in the discipline of contemplation allows us to grow also in understanding the potential healing powers that our wound can have for others.

A third benefit of contemplation is that it can increase our capacity to imagine peace, the “new creation” of which Paul speaks in Second Corinthians (5:17). In working to overcome violence, peace is more than the cessation of conflict. It is, rather a new state of being often quite different from what we had expected it to be. In seeking reconciliation, individuals and societies frequently imagine peace to be the *status quo ante*, a return to things as they were before the violence occurred. But of course we can never go back to that previous state. To be able to do so would mean that we would be able to undo and forget the harm that has been done to us. That harm’s occurrence has irrevocably changed us and our potential future. It is seared in our memory. To extirpate utterly that memory would be to do harm to us once again. It would in effect be saying that what happened was not as important as we have made it out to be (thereby trivializing the event), or that we are not as significant as we have made ourselves out to be (thereby trivializing the victim). The key here to dealing with the harm of the past is not forgetting it, but remembering it in a different way, so that we regain some future and are not held hostage to the past. Contemplation provides us a way into the future by imagining things differently, moving beyond trying to create a symmetry between the future and the past. We can return here again to John 20: the glorified body of Jesus is not simply the resuscitation of his earthly body, nor is it utterly different. There is continuity with the past, but also wonderful new perspectives as well. So too will be the “new creation” toward which reconciliation beckons us.

Contemplation, then, is a key practice of the spirituality of reconciliation. It attunes us in a special way to God. It attunes also to ourselves as agents of reconciliation. And it attunes us to that new creation to which we are called.

A second practice of a spirituality of reconciliation I wish to explore briefly is the creation of safe and hospitable spaces. It is within these spaces that victims can dwell to explore their own wounds and come to imagine a different future. They are first of all *spaces*, understood as social spaces but as physical spaces as well. They are social spaces inasmuch as they are created by other human beings into a social environment where victims are not diminished further in their humanity. The physical space itself can contribute to the sociality of the space. Think for example of the law of sanctuary in medieval Europe: people could flee to churches and there be immune from arrest and prosecution. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have at times found it useful to hold their hearings in churches in order to create the space for truth-telling and healing.

These spaces must first of all be safe. That is to say, they must be such that victims are not victimized a second time. The exploring of trauma, of harm done in the past is always risky. Such trauma is at bottom a profound breach of trust, a terrible disconnection from the pattern of human relationships. Healing is about the capacity to reconnect those sundered patterns of sociality. So victims must feel safe before they can confront the demons of the past. That sense of safety is one of the most important things that agents of reconciliation can mediate. It is in fact the first thing that those working in reconciliation must learn to do.

By mediating this sense of safety, agents of reconciliation prepare victims for an experience of the steadfastness of God, a God who does not abandon those God loves. This steadfastness is one of the principal characteristics of the God revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is the basis of covenant, the relationship God forges with his people. It is that experience of steadfastness, of faithfulness which creates the environment in which victims can again dare to hope.

Agents of reconciliation create these safe places by their capacity to be experienced by victims as trustworthy. This is largely achieved through the skills of communication of agents who work victims. Agents who appear to be dependable, who do not recoil from the victim because of what has happened to the victim, who can be counted upon by the victim to accompany them, come what may, who know how to listen without interrupting the victim's attempts to tell the story, who (in the words of *The Book of Common Prayer*) can "watch and wait and weep" with the victim in the night: these agents manifest the skills needed to create a safe place.⁵

These social spaces must not only be safe, but also hospitable. That is, they have to be welcoming to the victim in an idiom that the victim can understand. Too often hospitality may be extended in the ways that the agent of reconciliation know how to effect, but they may not be able to be understood and embraced by the victim. This is especially the case when there is a cultural difference between the agent and the victim (which is most often the case for the missionary as agent of reconciliation). Besides culture, agents of reconciliation must learn what acts of hospitality might recall memories of betrayal or other forms of harm in the events of the past with which the victim is wrestling. The points of engaging in hospitality in the social space are several. Beyond the obvious point of enhancing the experience of safety for the victim, extending hospitality to the victim is another way of saying that the victim is a valuable and valued human being. Inasmuch as trauma diminishes the humanity of the victim, offering hospitality is meant to reaffirm the humanity of the victim. Thirdly, the experience of human hospitality prepares the victim for its divine counterpart, the experience Christians call grace. The experience of reconciliation is one of receiving a surprising, undeserved gift. The healing that takes place, as already noted, can be one of the most profound and direct experiences of God that people can have. The hospitality of agents can prepare the way for that.

⁵ I describe this in more detail in "Entering the Healing Circle: The Practice of Reconciliation," in Stephen Bevans, Eleanor Doidge and Robert Schreiter (eds.), *The Healing Circle. Essays in Cross-Cultural Mission* (Chicago: CCGM Publications, 2000), 176-188.

Learning how to extend such hospitality has two dimensions. One is for the agent to recall the hospitality he or she has received in the past, and the experience of graciousness that accompanied that. Reliving those experiences of hospitality can help agents to be more effective in their own extending of hospitality. Second, the agent must learn what counts for hospitality for the victim. In individualist societies, hospitality is largely guided by rules of etiquette, by the things one does. In more collective societies, hospitality is about the ongoing quality of relationships, reaffirmed by the constant giving of gifts. Knowing when and how to offer hospitality that victims can understand and appreciate is central to a spirituality and a ministry of reconciliation.

Further Developments in a Spirituality of Reconciliation as Mission

In the previous two sections I have tried to outline some of the elements of a spirituality of reconciliation in a paradigm for mission. In this final section, I would like to sketch some possible developments of this spirituality, especially in light of biblical texts. As an example, I will use another Pauline text in Second Corinthians (4:7-11):

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.

This passage captures many of the dimensions of a spirituality of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a treasure, a gift from God, but one that is carried in clay jars, that is, within ourselves as frail human agents of God's work. Exploring the wounds that mark reconciliation and returning to the memories of which they are emblematic pull us through a welter of emotions: the experiences of being afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down. But even in the midst of such experiences, a certain strength carries us through: we are not crushed, driven to despair, forsaken nor destroyed. Those who struggle on in the work of reconciliation will recognize these emotions in victims, but often times in themselves as well.

What is clear at the same time is that despite these adversities we are not brought low, because of the great treasure we carry within us. Paul notes the paradox that makes this possible: because we carry the death of the Lord in our bodies. The language here is significant. Many of the afflictions which cry out for reconciliation are inscribed on our bodies—either on our individual bodies, as in the case of torture; or on the body politic, in terms of political memory. Memories are not only intellectual or emotional; they are often profoundly somatic. The death of Jesus we carry as such a somatic memory: the burden of his own death inscribed on our bodies. In this way it is something that cannot be forgotten. The death of Jesus is a wound of memory that has many dimensions. It is a wound that lies at the heart of our being and changes our orientation to those things that we have suffered. It gathers in our sufferings, takes them upon itself, and gives them a transfigured meaning. The wound is such that we cannot turn away from it, or avert our hearts and minds so as to forget it. The wound draws our suffering to itself, but is itself not the center of attention.

Rather, it points beyond itself to the resurrection of Jesus, when wounds will be transfigured and become a means of healing.

Johann Baptist Metz has spoken of the “dangerous memory” of Jesus Christ,⁶ dangerous because it is liberating, dangerous because the attempt to end the story of Jesus by blotting out his life only led to its explosion in another dimension. The healing grace of reconciliation, the life of Christ made visible in our bodies, has that same dangerous and liberative potential. It is the difference between being struck down, but not destroyed. God’s capacity to reconcile all things in Christ, to make “peace by the blood of his cross,” (Col 1:20) unveils for us the connection between our wounds, the wounds of Christ, and the wounded heart of God who so loves the world.

Conclusion

The spirituality of reconciliation as mission is still in its early phases of development. It grows not only out of the theology of reconciliation articulated in the last lecture, but also out of the renewed concept of the *missio dei* which has come to the fore again in recent years.⁷ In this renewed understanding of a concept of mission from the 1950s, emphasis is placed upon how the work of mission is first of all the action of God in the world, an action in which we participate. That mission is nothing less than God’s reconciling the world to God’s own self through the action of Christ and the Holy Spirit. By reflecting on this theme, the connection between reconciliation and mission becomes even clearer. There is a theological bond between reconciliation and mission that is more than the current contextual need for overcoming violence in the contemporary world. Reconciliation is a revelation of how God relates to the world, and how God sees the destiny of the world. I hope that the attempt to articulate some of the elements of that spirituality of reconciliation here—the role of wounds, the place of contemplative prayer, the creation of safe and hospitable spaces—will lead to further commitment to this paradigm as a way of imparting God’s Good News for the world.

⁶ Johannes Baptist Metz, *Befreiendes Gedaechtnis Jesu Christi* (Mainz: Matthias Gruenewald Verlag, 1970).

⁷ See for example Stephen Bevans, “Wisdom from the Margins: Systematic Theology and the Missiological Imagination,” *Proceedings of the 56th Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 56(2001)21-42; Robert Schreiter, “Mission for the Twenty-First Century: A Catholic Perspective,” in Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder (eds.), *Mission for the Twenty First Century* (Chicago: CCGM Publications, 2001), 32-42.