

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is one of those terms that is much used but perhaps not always properly understood. This church named after the soldier turned bishop Martin of Tours is dedicated to peace and reconciliation. It is a partner in the Community of the Cross of Nails that shares that same commitment to peace and reconciliation. But what does this mean in practice?

We do not need to be reminded of all the many terrible conflicts raging in our world today. We see so many dreadful images on our television screens that it is perhaps easy to become immune to the sheer horror that they depict. On a purely human level we need some form of defence mechanism if we are not to be totally overcome. At the same time we may feel a strong sense of resignation if not despair. Can there ever be a solution to conflicts that are so deeply rooted and almost have an unstoppable momentum of their own? We can pray, yes, but do our prayers actually make any difference?

Well, the Christian Gospel gives a very firm answer: yes, it can indeed. And that hope lies at the heart of what the Community of the Cross of Nails stands for. The various partners are in many different parts of the world and yet share the same mission to pray for and promote peace and reconciliation.

And our Bible reading from St Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth is a key text here. It takes us back to first principles. Reconciliation is in the first place that between God and humanity. And the initiative is God's not ours. His will is that the whole of humanity, the whole of creation will be united with him and with one another. That task of reconciliation is centred in the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ. Through those saving acts the barrier to reconciliation, sin, is broken down. We may continue to see conflict and hardship now but we believe that the victory over the powers of evil has already been won by our Lord Jesus Christ.

That reconciling by God of us to himself is a message that the world needs to hear. And it is the task of Christians to do that. As St Paul states so clearly, we have been charged with the ministry of reconciliation, of being ambassadors for Christ. God works through human beings, through us. That is a serious responsibility, and very daunting. And yet we pray and hope that as a Church and as individuals we will be given the spiritual resources to do that.

Kingsley Boulton
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