

International Justice

This last Monday, the 17th of July, was the World Day for International Justice. This annual day was set up in 2010 and the 17th of July was chosen as the anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, the treaty that created the International Criminal Court. The day is used to focus attention on particular issues such as genocide and violence against women.

Each country has its own legal system and judiciary. But there are atrocities such as genocide where an international legal body is not only appropriate but necessary. Crimes against humanity cannot be left to individual countries to deal with. Indeed there are cases where legal systems of particular countries have been involved in criminal acts. Sadly many such cases can be cited even from recent history. In such circumstances only an international court can be seen as impartial and fair.

Justice lies at the heart of true human co-existence. Without justice society and nations cannot function properly. Without justice the only viable alternatives are, on the one hand, dictatorship and, on the other, anarchy.

Certainly peace and reconciliation cannot exist without justice. Conflicts often arise out of injustice and exploitation. Though they also come about as a result of greed and a longing for power. More often than not the roots are more complex and a combination of different causes.

Similarly reconciliation cannot succeed if there is still a sense of injustice, of issues still unresolved. And for us as Christians repentance comes into the mix. We have to acknowledge any wrongs that we have committed and show penitence. This contrasts with a number of high profile international trials where the accused continue to maintain their innocence despite all the compelling evidence against them

Our Bible reading (Deuteronomy 16.18-20) is a good summary of God's will for true justice, addressed in this case to the ancient Hebrews on their way to the promised land. Only with impartial and incorrupt justice will they flourish.

For us God's justice is absolute and perfect. And we believe and hope that ultimately his justice will prevail, even if human justice so often fails. That is the hope which we hold on to. In the meantime we pray that the striving for true justice in this world will continue.

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