

The Catholic Church as an Instrument of Peace

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In the countryside near Assisi a humble church had fallen into ruin. Weathered stones were crumbling, some had fallen to the ground. It was here, at the decaying church of San Damiano, that a young Francis of Assisi would seek solitude. Its state of disrepair paralleled the condition of his life. His youthful adventures had come to an end; he was now a target of his father's abuse, Pietro who considered Francis a coward and worthless dreamer. Like the small church, Francis' soul was crumbling.

However, Francis was not without hope: as he moved through the dark night of the soul his conversion deepened. Though he stumbled in the dark faith guided him, and one day, as he stood before the Cross of San Damiano, the Lord spoke, "Rebuild my house."

Francis, the merchant's son — later known as the Poverello, the little poor man, in honor of his simplicity, poverty, and humility — interpreted "rebuild my house" in its simplest meaning: he rebuilt the little church. As stone after stone was laid in place, Francis rebuilt his spiritual life.² Soon other privileged young men volunteered: the Franciscan Order was born.

In retrospect, we understand the Lord did not mean Francis should rebuild one small church in the valley below Assisi. "Rebuild my house" referred to the entire Apostolic Church and, to this day Francis' words and deeds are levers we use to lift stones into place as we, too, rebuild the house of the Lord. For example, the "Prayer of Francis" — not written by Francis but attributed to his spirit — includes the phrase "make me an instrument of your peace." The prayer invites us to become spiritual stonemasons bringing the Lord's peace to a troubled world, as, like Francis,

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² See *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vols 1-3*, New City Press, New York, 2001.

we observe peace crumbling around us. Conflict erodes peace, as the wind, rain, and snow eroded the stones at San Damiano. If we listen closely, we hear Francis call us to rebuild the Apostolic Church — *as an instrument of peace*.

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So that we might better visualize this project let us turn attention briefly to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's thesis, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*.³ Bonaventure was a Franciscan general minister, the 7th after Francis, a contemporary of Thomas Aquinas. Bonaventure who was respected for his insight into Franciscan spirituality and Benedict XVI offer a big-picture view perspective: they view events in the context of salvation history.

Benedict XVI writes, "... Scripture contains 'seeds'; that is, seeds of meaning. And this meaning develops in a constant process of growth in time. Consequently, we are able to interpret many things which the Fathers could not have known because for them these things still lay in the dark future while for us they are accessible as past history. Still other things remain in the dark for us. And so, new knowledge arises constantly from Scripture."⁴

In other words, we have not yet seen the mission of the Church fulfilled; we are a work-in-progress headed for a known destination.⁵ Benedict XVI writes, "Bonaventure's theology of history culminates in his hope for an age of God-given Sabbath Rest within history. The real content of this age is described with the word 'Peace.'"⁶

Bonaventure viewed Francis as a herald, a new John the Baptist, a new Elias announcing the Kingdom of God — with Francis advocating peace as an integral part of the coming Kingdom.⁷ This anticipation of peace remains at the forefront of our prayers as a Church. In the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* we read:

"The promotion of peace in the world is an integral part of the Church's mission of continuing Christ's work of redemption on earth. In

³ Ratzinger, Joseph. *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*. Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1971.

⁴ Ibid. 9

⁵ Ibid. 14

⁶ Ibid. 56

⁷ Ibid. 32

fact, the Church is, in Christ, a ‘sacrament’ or sign and instrument of peace in the world and for the world. [Quoting Blessed JPII 2000 World Peace Day].”⁸

When we consider the Church as an instrument of peace we provoke prayerful introspection. *How* will peace come to the world? We ask: when we go forth after Mass into a Fallen World are we prepared to tame the wolf that awaits us? Or once we pass through the door of the Church will we become timid? Making peace is not a casual ministry: it requires skill, training, practice, and prayer. We come to realize we need Francis as our mentor.

If we observe closely, we find the concept of a Fallen World is real: a host of ills afflicts Mankind. Yet the desire for peace and compassion is universal; stories of love, charity, and kindness outnumber stories of woe. The world is blessed; we have much for which to be thankful. Nonetheless, two opposing sets of forces are in play: forces that drag Man into the mud and forces that lift him up; forces of darkness and of light; forces that overwhelm with unconsciousness, pain, and despair as well as forces that foster awareness, happiness, and righteousness. This duality of warring forces gives rise to conflict.

Yet most conflict is normal and can be healthy; the wolf inside is not summoned. Typically, we are proficient in managing day-to-day conflict and often experience personal growth as a result. Thanks to our ability to resolve conflict peacefully we do not live in a Darwinian world. Nonetheless, *unresolved* conflict diminishes success and happiness, and can escalate to wreak harm. Even if we are free from conflict in the present moment, we harbor lingering suspicion we have not entirely escaped the wolf; we feel him silently stalking us from a distance. Or we fall prey to the opposite urge — we pretend the wolf does not exist even when his fangs injure our flesh. We harbor an intuition that something remains unknown that we *should* understand. We may wonder, what is conflict, *really*?

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⁸ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005 (Printed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), p 224

Fundamentally, conflict involves two forces locked in opposition. In theological terms, we may speak of Satan opposing God. This is a *basic concept* — in conflict we have two or more conscious agents acting on opposing intentions. Conflict arises when ***I will not let you have what you want to have***; when ***I will not let you do what you want to do***; when ***I will not allow you to be who you want to be***. Or conflict results when ***you will not let me have what I want; do what I want; or be who I want***.

Thus, when we encounter conflict we must ask: what do we want *to be, do, or have* that is opposed? We assess the conflict to identify the opposing intentions.

We do not mistake a problem for conflict; they are not the same. If we seek to move a boulder uphill we may encounter a problem due to gravity, but gravity is not a conscious agent and does not care if we move the rock. The key factor is *free will*. When we exercise our free will; our intention may oppose another's intention. I exercise free will and make choices; you exercise free will and make choices. If our intentions are opposed, we experience conflict. (Theoretically, when we conform our will to God's Will our intentions align and conflict is minimal or non-existent. This path to conflict resolution is suggested repeatedly in Scripture.)

In a Fallen World, however, our wills are *not* aligned. Distrust arises. Communication breaks down and prevents us from addressing our differences. Affinity plummets. We begin to *dislike* each other; we are invited to hate. The moral grain of the universe, based on love, is violated. Rather than love one another, we seek to dominate or coerce. As unhealed wounds fester into bitterness or despair, we seek to settle old scores.

Unresolved conflict that creates separation parallels sin, as a fundamental aspect of sin is separation. Adam and Eve separated from God's love; they placed distance between themselves and God; their intentions deviated from His will.

In a similar manner, in conflict we separate from our brothers and sisters. Domination and coercion replace love and charity. We employ force to make things go our way. Distance separates the divine-in-us from divine-in-the-other. Then, when we fail to love our neighbor, we simultaneously distance ourselves from God.

Likewise, when we fail to love God, we become unable to love our neighbor. Lack of love sets the stage for conflict escalation. Separation from God brings separation from our brother; separation from our brother begets separation from God. Conversely, when we draw closer to our neighbor we draw closer to God. When we heal our relationship with God we are able to love our neighbor.

These dynamics inspire a unique approach to conflict resolution. If we lack the courage to approach our brother or we fail to convince our brother to reconcile, we turn our focus instead to spiritual formation. After we improve our relationship with God, we are drawn mysteriously to repair relationships and we experience greater success. We find people who “come home” after falling away from faith automatically begin to heal relationships. Conversely, people who repair damaged relationships begin experiencing a renewal of faith.

This makes additional sense when, in Scripture, we read that a *destructive third party*, the Serpent in the Garden, fueled division between Man and God. Simultaneously, human relationships were damaged: Adam and Eve bickered. Sin in the form of separation flourished while love was diminished. Communication became distorted; agreement was inhibited. Free will, no longer tethered to God’s will, generated random intentions and gave birth to conflict.

A *constructive third party* must remedy the damage of original sin brought on by the *destructive third party*. Christ the Mediator came to heal the broken relationship between Man and God. It was His love that was needed to foster reconciliation. God incarnated and drew close to man to help men align their intentions with His Will. As a result, we find true peacemaking and reconciliation in the Church, where the faithful seek communion with Christ through the Eucharist. Thus, the Church already functions as *the* primary peacemaking institution in the world and, eventually, all mediators, conciliators, and peacemakers must draw from this life-affirming source of divine love.

While the concept is simple the peacemaking process may be challenging. Healing our relationship with God is a life-long endeavor even with the assistance of the best of spiritual directors. Learning to love our brothers and sisters does not happen overnight — we do not learn to reconcile in a day.

On the vertical axis representing relationship with God we utilize sacraments, prayer, spiritual direction, love, mercy, forgiveness and a willingness to accept grace. On the horizontal axis representing relationship with neighbors we employ communication, negotiation, and interpersonal skills, problem-solving ability, cultural sensitivity, compassion. We muster the ability to apologize and grant or accept forgiveness. We turn to laws codifying civil behavior. Spiritually transformative mediation orchestrates the elements on both axes.

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Saint Francis, by word and deed, helped people heal relationships. His legacy serves as a guide to help contemporary mediators better understand conflict resolution. The vision expressed in this paper integrates the story of Francis taming the wolf (and the discipline of Pastoral Theology) with contemporary conflict resolution.

For the sake of clarification, a brief look at the conflict resolution discipline is warranted. The discipline enjoyed major expansion in the 1980's, giving birth to an "alternative dispute resolution (ADR) revolution" that transformed the courts. The "multi-door courthouse" concept encouraged courts to provide a menu of services to assist litigants. The mediation profession matured, alternative dispute resolution education became common at law schools, and the body of conflict resolution literature mushroomed.

It is now common for a disputant to consider a continuum of conflict resolution choices.⁹ Conciliatory options include: dialogue; facilitated conversation; informal and formal negotiation; or mediation. Using these options, parties control the outcome. Mediation, for example, honors party self-determinism as a fundamental principle. This respect for party free will, or self-determinism, is one reason that mediation is ranked high in party satisfaction. Spiritually transformative mediation goes a step further and helps parties align their will with the will of God.

As we move along the continuum of choices we find options that allow parties to seek a verdict or ruling from a third party decision maker — an arbitrator, judge, or

⁹ See chart on page 94 of *Taming the Wolf: Peace through Faith*.

jury. Parties present their case to a third party for adjudication. Processes become more formal; parties may require assistance with legal procedures.

Taming the Wolf: Peace through Faith was first conceived while I co-mediated settlement conferences in the Los Angeles Superior Court. There I observed parties arrive unprepared and watched as parties and attorneys previously committed to litigation attempted to execute the difficult pivot to conciliation. Previously, in litigation mode they sought to impeach the opposing party — they hoped to prove their opponent was a crook, liar, or despot. In mediation, however, they were asked to collaborate in the search for the best possible outcome. As a result, parties prepared to collaborate in creative problem solving typically achieved the greatest benefit. Those who were unprepared did not achieve the same level of success; nonetheless, the results were better than going to trial.

In the following brief discussion I will introduce the reader to a few of the procedures available to assist parties.

Mediation stresses *process*. Typically, we tend to focus solely on substance, failing to recognize *how* we go about resolving disputes is critical. If a process does not promise and deliver *safety and hope* and actively promote *willingness* to participate, the effort goes nowhere; parties remain stuck in impasse. For this reason, a mediator introduces process guidelines, consulting with the parties, navigating barriers to convening, encouraging participation, and fostering willingness to communicate. The mediator starts the dance and keeps it going.

Negotiations usually stall when above-the-line positions that usually offer one solution are advanced; in contrast, below-the-line interests may be satisfied in many ways. For this reason, mediators guide parties away from static positions and toward flexible below-the-line interests and underlying motivations. The mediator coaches the negotiation and emphasizes below-the-line interests that lead to creative solutions.

As parties often lack negotiation skills, a mediator assists as they learn to increase mutual satisfaction through improved deal making. Parties discover new ways of communicating their interests, new ways of assessing value, and new

methods of exchanging tangible or intangible valuables. They learn the negotiation “dance” that guarantees the best possible outcome.

Mediation success rests on the simple but powerful paradigm of *a constructive third party*. Conflict dynamics frequently prevent two parties from resolving their own dispute. Emotional and perceptual barriers make it impossible to generate the safety, hope and willingness needed for them to enter into dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation. A constructive third party, a facilitator or mediator, changes these dynamics, enabling parties to convene. Subsequently, when parties find it difficult to speak to each other in the face of crippling emotional distress, they turn to the mediator to keep the process going.

The success of this *constructive third party* paradigm is not surprising when we consider the Fallen World had its origin in the actions of a *destructive third party*. The constructive third party seeks to reverse fundamental causes of separation. In many cases, a constructive third party facilitator is critical — the vital factor in mediation success.

The preceding brief discussion illustrates that contemporary conflict resolution offers techniques, processes, and insights vital to achieving resolution and reconciliation. When we combine such structured dispute resolution with spiritual transformation, we breathe life into the vision of the Church as an instrument of peace.

Consider, once again, the conclusion of the Mass when we are commissioned, “Go forth, the Mass is ended. Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord. Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life. Go in peace.” The love of Christ fills our hearts; we intend to bring His Peace to the world. But, when we step outside the Church door into a Fallen World, we may realize we lack command of the art of peacemaking. We encounter the need to train, prepare, and organize so that we might “go forth” as mediators sent by *the* Mediator.

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To accomplish this vision the Catholic Church will need to recruit and train the largest panel of peacemakers ever assembled. The Church will need to gain recognition as the institution best prepared to reconcile a Fallen World. This

requires a structured approach to spreading His Peace. A conflict map that charts our peacemaking intentions and the intentions of those who oppose us is needed. Catholic intentions, reflecting God's will, are found in Scripture and Tradition; they are codified in the writings of the Magisterium; the Holy Spirit reveals and guides such intentions. Opposing intentions are less well codified; we will need to compile an inventory.

The Church addresses conflict with three approaches: 1) power and authority are exercised; 2) disputes are adjudicated based on rights (laid out in Canon Law); 3) brothers seek to mutually satisfy interests through collaborative negotiation. In summary, the Church turns to power, rights, or interests.

In what sequence do we usually proceed? Do we adhere to Matthew 18:15 and meet with our brother? Or do we start by taking our brother to court to enforce our rights? Do we meet with our brother only after our power fails to convince him he must satisfy our wishes? Do we meet with our brother only after we fail to enforce our interpretation of our rights in a hearing?

As we assess our approach to conflict, we must keep in mind the world will turn a skeptical eye in our direction if we are unable to heal conflict internally, in the Body of Christ. Thus, we must begin by rebuilding our house. This sentiment was echoed by Pope Paul VI: "The power of evangelization will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways. ... As evangelizers, we must offer Christ's faithful not the image of people divided and separated by unedifying quarrels, but the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting-point beyond the real tensions, thanks to a shared, sincere and disinterested search for truth."¹⁰

Another pope, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI turned our attention to the influence of the Holy Spirit in salvation history and invited us to view the Church as a work-in-progress. Assuming that perspective we might ask if our peacemaking proposal is consistent with Vatican II. The Council promoted heightened

¹⁰ Pope Paul VI — *Apostolic Exhortation On Evangelization in the Modern World*. December 8, 1975, § 77

collaboration, shared responsibility, consultation with laity, and a dialogical approach to community. In previous eras we might have considered the Holy Spirit assisted Bishops in their role of teaching obedient laity. Post Vatican II we consider the Holy Spirit inspires the entire Body of Christ.: everyone has a mission; many have a ministry.

Brad Hinze, in *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church*,¹¹ argues the Council requires ongoing clarification. For example, while dialogue is encouraged, no canonical requirement exists directing the use of dialogue. Though there is a call for collaboration, the Hierarchy retains decision-making power. Hinze suggests such conflicting signals cause confusion. Nonetheless, it is clear Vatican II placed emphasis on relationship and communion, and instructs us to pay attention to all the ways God enters into the dialogue of the Church.

The dialogical vision advanced by the Council, in which parties engage in enhanced dialogue, parallels mediation. Council documents call on the faithful to know God better by loving one another, which parallels faith-based mediation in which parties resolve differences, restore affinity and communication, and reconcile in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Vatican II echoed the conversion summons Francis received: “rebuild my house”. The faithful are called to convert the modern world. In response to this call they will need to understand Christ as Mediator and discover their calling as mediators. As they go forth to evangelize they will require a collaborative approach consistent with the Gospel, consistent with Francis’ admonitions.¹²

In this effort we must avoid pouring new wine into old wineskins; instead we should develop new training that fulfills the Council vision. Canonists will become educated in alternative dispute resolution; the Canon Law Society will form an ADR Section as the American Bar Association has done. Rome will support a comprehensive alternative dispute resolution protocol that safeguards rights of the faithful. Clergy and laity will become proficient in conflict management and

¹¹ Hinze, Bradford E. *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church*, Continuum Publishing Group, New York, 2006.

¹² Karris, Robert J. O.F.M., *The Admonitions of St. Francis: Sources and Meanings*, The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, New York, 1999.

prevention. Conflict specialists will deliver regular seminars, raising overall Diocesan awareness of conflict prevention and management strategies.

Spiritually transformative mediators will first seek to address a broad range of *internal* disputes. Mediators will facilitate resolution of disputes in parishes, mediating disputes that affect staff or parishioners. They will reconcile troubled marriages and resolve conflict within extended families. Cross-cultural disputes will be addressed. Dioceses will rely on mediators to resolve conflicts in leadership and management and to help address flawed organizational structures that lead to disputes. Mediators will manage and resolve conflicts within lay ministries. They will assist with parish closings, helping negotiate business disputes as well as emotional conflict.

A formal dispute resolution program will make it possible to monitor conflict patterns, exposing “hot spots” where dissent and disruption are caused by antisocial agents, prompting investigations into hidden influences causing destruction. Such “early warning systems” will detect previously hidden conditions that have a potential to give rise to scandal.

Catholics might enter into pledges to settle disputes with one another in a manner consistent with the Gospel, mimicking major corporations that sign pledges with the Corporate Partnering Institute (CPI), agreeing to resolve disputes with mediation or other conflict resolution methods. In a similar manner,

In Fall 2011 presenters at a canon law meeting pondered whether the faithful were being well served by the '83 Code of Canon Law. Consensus held the laity hardly knew of the code's existence; thus it had not been widely embraced. This is not surprising. Laity are not comfortable with the “letter of the law.” They prefer to “talk it out” and speak to their experience *in their own words*. If we compare approaches based on interests, rights, or power we find the layperson prefers facilitated conversation that seeks satisfaction of interests. A defense of their rights begins with heartfelt expression of interests as part of a process that allows them to discuss how the canons relate to their lives.

Mediation takes place in the shadow of rights and power; often mediation is possible only when a party fears the adverse consequences of a trial or hearing.

Regardless of whether or not a party anticipates unwanted consequences, they harbor an inherent preference for party self-determinism, which a trial or hearing does not provide. Parties want to frame the dispute in their own words rather than have an attorney frame their claim in the language of law.

If we place an emphasis on a litigious approach, whether a trial or tribunal or hearing, we undermine Gospel charism. Faith-based peacemakers understand this liability and work as instruments of peace to nurture spiritual transformation.

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What can we hope to achieve? We can improve day-to-day Church operations; however, that is not the larger goal. Rather, we seek to infuse the culture with the Peace of Christ. As we gain proficiency we will gain the confidence required to face a troubled world and bring about transformation.

The adverse conditions of a Fallen World will no doubt greet any attempt to “rebuild His house.” Given the cornerstone of the Fallen World is deception we can expect covert agents will seek to compromise the Church with subterfuge and sabotage, forcing us to discern legitimate dissent from covert intentions to destroy. Potential for error exists: we may attribute evil where none exists or we may fail to recognize actual evil, allowing harm to take place; we may become harsh when a soft heart is needed; or we may respond with softness when a firm stance is appropriate.

Covert destructive intentions, all too common in a Fallen World, can best be handled with relationship-centered processes (like mediation) that unearth actual intentions and interests. Typically, the success of judicial processes in exposing deception is uncertain; the trial or hearing process may even provide an advantage to disputants skilled in deception and obfuscation.

As we go forth to bring peace secular politics may seep into the Church compromising internal harmony. Associations with radical political activists may foster division. Peacemaking will become increasingly difficult as exposure to contagious influences contaminates our collective will. In such instances, learning conversations and reconciliation seminars will allow the faithful to assess intentions and create a conflict map. These heart-to-heart approaches can expose destructive

hidden influences while reinforcing harmony and morale. Such processes, designed and delivered by trained conflict specialists, provide factual information coupled with an opportunity to share matters of the heart, thus allowing differences to surface in a setting that encourages care and respect.

Reconciliation seminars also uncover and diminish covert attacks that arise when the faithful become alloyed to political or cultural views opposed to the Church. Connecting heart and intellect in a faith setting filled with the Holy Spirit fosters a turn away from narrow political activism to robust peacemaking that bears the fruit of unity, harmony, and inclusivity.

Another challenge may arise: deception wears many disguises and may arrive masquerading as help, the kind that ultimately does harm. Such deception is as old as the Garden. In this category we find covert activity driven by the negative influence of “spirits of evil.” St. Paul warned the Ephesians, “For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the principalities and the ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world, the spirits of evil in the heavens (Eph 6:12).”

Saint Paul recommends advanced spiritual formation that prepares us to recognize spiritual dimensions of conflict, and we find Francis of Assisi engaged in spiritual warfare: if he had not understood evil *and* the saving presence of the Lord he would not have confronted the fierce wolf. Thus, we glimpse the need for an expanded perspective on the multiple layers of sources of conflict.

Mediation, contrary to popular opinion, does not aim for appeasement or compromise, but rather seeks enduring peace, which may require we fight ethically, balancing power, rights, and interests. While we may invoke power to defend our existence, or demand respect for rights that convert chaos into order, we cannot rely solely on power or rights for a final solution. Only relationship built on love and respect endures. Eventually, we must engage in heart-to-heart dialogue to satisfy mutual interests. When conflict resolution is reduced to mere techniques it loses its robust power. In contrast, when we transform hearts we become evangelists of His Peace.

It is worth repeating: any attempt to handle external conflict before achieving internal reconciliation is risky. When we construct a bridge to the troubled world we open a path for destructive influences to travel toward us. Thus, we must post metaphorical sentries to monitor traffic on that bridge. There is a need for metaphorical sentries on the bridge when we seek to resolve to external conflicts.

Only after completing our “inner work” can we turn our attention to external conflict: instances when the Church comes under attack and instances when the Church sends peacemakers to help others. In the first category, the Church is an interested party seeking a path to resolution and reconciliation. In these instances we need “to fight better” and transform the fight into the fix. We manage the conflict as we search for a path to peace.

The form of that peace matters. John Paul Lederach, in *The Moral Imagination*,¹³ argues peace accords are usually insufficient; rather we must build smart flexible “platforms for change” that promote new, ongoing creative relationships that assure enduring peace. The passion we expend in fighting must be redirected to building peace. Fighting is easier than making peace and winning is easier than transforming self and others, yet transformation and peace are our goals. Thus we must show even greater passion when we engage the peace effort.

Parties that oppose the Church rarely are aware of the layers of motivation beneath their counter intention. They have not analyzed their true interests or assessed their relationship with God, which may be so damaged it appears non-existent. They may seek to harm all who trigger painful emotions associated with their failed relationship with God. Our task is overcoming these challenges, realizing that even when conflict targets an institution, all conflict arises from individuals.

In order to overcome the hurt, confusion, and wounds that create antipathy toward faith we strive to understand how a relationship with God can become damaged. What forces separate Man from God? How do we comfort the disenchanted and disillusioned, the lost and angry, or those who despair? How do we unravel evil intentions and comfort the repentant conscience? In conflict

¹³ Lederach, John Paul. *The Moral Imagination: the art and soul of building peace*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005.

resolution we assist the hostile party as they unearth heart-based interests, unmask lies and deception, clear their vision and soften their hearts.

Our culture emphasizes power and rights. At the same time, the majority of people desire faith-based peacemaking that transforms hearts and forms souls. Most people have a desire, sometimes an unconscious desire, to align their intentions with the will of God, which never deviates from unconditional love. They sense a path to peace exists, if only they could find the way. The Catholic Church offers the way but to make that known, we must train a significant number of skilled peacemakers. We can find no better witness to His Peace than active peacemaking. The Face of a Franciscan that sees God in the other becomes the cornerstone of New Evangelization, as we demonstrate Gospel intentions through conflict resolution. If we fail to advance peacemaking we will be forced to dance as a false self in the drama of the Fallen World. Failing to recognize the tree of life we will circle the tree of the knowledge of good and evil without end.

Join us in envisioning the formation of the largest association of peacemakers in the world, men and women competent with contemporary processes *and* spiritual direction. Imagine the formation of a think tank where the mediators, theologians, and pastoral ministers collaborate to design peacemaking programs. Guided by the Holy Spirit, they will devote their lives to rebuilding His house and hasten the era of Sabbath Rest, the era of Peace.

God Bless. May Francis speak to your heart as he has spoken to mine.