

Internacional Forum on interfaith and transcultural peacebuilding  
Daring reconciliation?!  
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**“Reconciliation and Peace:  
A Pathway for Relief in South Sudan.”  
(cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21)  
Father James (Original Language)**

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Reconciliation, Forgiveness and Peace is the hardest thing to do when we have been deeply wounded. Why should we forgive and reconcile with our enemies, those who have violated us, our families, taken the lives of our loved ones or robbed us of our livelihood. Deep down, we all need to ask: “will I allow the poison of revenge to destroy my life or will I choose to forgive and reconcile; and reject the poison.” But how do we do this? How can we really forgive and reconcile with our enemies? The answer is found in the knowledge of knowing the “One” who gives the power to forgive and reconcile.

From my personal experience, I experienced the power to forgive and reconcile after the unique incident of the landmine which struct my vehicle on route for my pastoral and spiritual ministry outside Juba town during the Sudan Civil War in 1992, the echo of which stills resounds until today. It was a horrific accident which took lives of some innocent passengers who were with me. Of course, some lost their lives, and some survived the horrific accident.

In my hospital bed where I spent more that nine (9) months, I had a near death encounter with the perpetrator of the horrific accident, the young man who placed the landmine on the road to revenge his anger and bitterness on me. The near-death encounter was more a search by the perpetrator of the horrific accident seeking forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. The perpetrator came to my hospital bed with his parents whom I knew very well. The young man in the presence of his parents said: “Father, I am the reason for the state of pain you’re in now, and for your broken leg which is continuously hurting you. I am the one who put the landmine in your way ...” I asked him in my pain: “But why did you do that?” A shocking confession from the young man who said: “I am married, and I live with my wife and children in the internally displaced camp that you shepherd, but since you did not give me enough food because I felt betrayed by you in the material food distribution, I decided to revenge against you by planting the landmine on the road where you were about to pass through. I was very annoyed with you because

of the injustice you did to me and my children who were very hungry because of not enough food in his home. I could not believe my ears. However, I could see the deep grief in the young man's eyes who continued to say: Father, my conscience torments me. If you do not forgive me, I will be left with one option of taking off my life!" Then I spoke to the young man: "son, reconciliation and forgiveness is very important, but it is difficult humanly; but in the name of Christ Crucified, I have cleared my heart from what happened, and I forgive you from the bottom of my heart." At that moment, I was a prisoner of myself in my conscience.

At this point, I needed first to remove the trauma of my bitterness which was poison to me, I needed to reconcile with myself, I needed to forgive myself from the silent spirit of revenge which was bothering me from reaching out and extending my hand of reconciliation and forgiveness. At this instance, I had no peace in myself. I had failed to understand the opportunity and possibility of throwing out the bitter poison I was holding in my heart. I had no peace of building the bridge of hope with the young man. I had to make a personal strong effort with the help and grace of God to overcome and break the wall of pain and bitterness; I had to ask God to enhance me to destroy the poison that was to kill and destroy my relationship with my God because I am his Minister to Pastor his people. I got entangled in the bitterness which was destroying me.

God's message for me and us all as daughters and sons of this global world, and because we are all born in the image and likeness of our Creator (Genesis 1:27) is to reconcile and forgive oneself to have Peace of heart and mind; and after which we can extend the bridge of hope with the perpetrators who could be a brother or sister. If you do not reconcile and forgive yourself, you cannot extend that olive branch bridge of reconciliation, forgiveness, peace and hope. Let us ask God for that simple divine power to reconcile and forgive, so that we can reconcile and forgive our sisters and brothers; eventually, to have the concrete bridge of peace and hope which is a pathway of relief in our journey and pilgrimage in the changing landscape. The more faith you have, the more reconciliation and forgiveness you can show. Be assured that through reconciliation and forgiveness, your conscience will be cleared, and you will start a right path and relationship with God your Creator.

"Now that I have asked God to forgive and reconcile me and change my life, do I have to be perfect?" No, being a Christian isn't about doing or saying all the right things. It's based on a vital, personal relationship with God. Surely, as you start out in the changing landscapes, you will probably have many questions, and maybe even have a few doubts. What matters is that you have been freed from your inner bondage, and you have become a new person, for the old life is gone; and a new life has begun! (cf. Ephesians 4:22 - 24).