

Internacional Forum on interfaith and transcultural peacebuilding
Daring reconciliation?!
September 19-20, 2024

**WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW TO BE ROBBED OF HOPE
-FOR A RECONCILED PERU
Carmen De los Ríos TRANSLATION**

Good morning to all of you. I am very grateful to Mission 21 for inviting me to this important event, the International Forum on Interreligious and Transcultural Peacebuilding in the framework of respect for human rights.

I will present my experiences of collaboration in the construction of a Culture of Peace in the Ayacucho Region, Peru; carried out from the Loyola Ayacucho Center during the last 20 years. I will develop the following points:

- The internal armed conflict 1980 to 2000.
- The Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission - TRC.
- The Loyola Ayacucho Center: forgiveness and reconciliation for a Culture of Peace.
- The current situation and Reconciliation as a task.

My exhibition is entitled: "[We should not allow to be robbed of hope... for a reconciled Peru](#)". I have chosen this title for three fundamental reasons:

The first, because at this time in Peru and in the world, we have many reasons for despair, many reasons to say "this no longer has a future, we are walking towards a dark abyss from which no one will pull us out"; it has been Pope Francis when he visited Peru in 2018 who told us: "People of Peru, [do not let yourselves be robbed of hope](#)". That word permeated my heart and I understood that as believers, as people of faith in the Risen Christ, we must not let them steal our hope: the confidence, the illusion, the optimism, the perspective that we can face the problems and overcome them. The confidence that Good overcomes evil.

Secondly, because God entrusted us with the message of reconciliation. As II Corinthians 5:19 says: "[God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ and entrusted to us the message of reconciliation](#)". Christians, as followers of Jesu, have the fundamental task of being agents of reconciliation in this polarized and torn world that is disintegrating more and more every day.

And the third because it is urgent, not only in Peru, but in the whole world, to work for reconciliation. For us, to be agents of reconciliation means to promote spaces, places, generating bridges and processes of encounter where people and societies can rethink their relationships, their ways of living and coexisting, and can share their perceptions, their feelings, their experiences, to visualize new ways of living, to design the common good and walk towards a desirable, shared, longed-for future. That is to say: to be agents that help to open the perspective that *Another World is Possible* and that we should build it among all people.

1. The internal armed conflict from 1980 to 2000 in Peru and in Ayacucho.

After years of military dictatorship, Peru returned to democracy in 1980, but two groups took up arms. Sendero Luminoso-SL and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement-MRTA declared war on the state and on civil society. Peru suffered fratricidal violence, violence “between neighbours”¹, between 1980 and 2000. In August 2003, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its Final Report after two years of thorough investigation and with the registration of 17,000 testimonies of victims and relatives of fatal victims. This painful and violent stage of our history we call “internal armed conflict”, the government does not recognize it as such, because it does not acknowledge that they were also an active part of terrorist violence.

When the TRC report was issued, and up to now, many people and institutions do not accept its results; still a denialist current persists. But the truth has made its way to the thousands of survivors and victims of the conflict. The data provided by the TRC Report, after 24 years, have remained small. The government, under pressure from the victims and the Human Rights Movement, opened the Unified Registry of Victims, registering more than 277,738 documented victims, considering various affectations² such as: death, forced disappearance, disability, rape, torture, displacement and forced recruitment, sexual violence, kidnapping, arbitrary detention, imprisonment of innocent people, among others. Of the 277,738 victims³, the vast majority -236,412- are civilian victims. One of the main conclusions of the Report is that the non-combatant civilian population was the most affected during the years of the conflict. The report states that “out of every ten people killed in the armed conflict, eight were civilians”.

It is difficult to perceive what the violence means just by looking at the numbers, but it can give us an idea of the pain and suffering of so many families, especially the pain of the relatives of the disappeared, pain that never ceases; and of the consequences that this has brought in the breakdown of the social network and the mental health of the population as the main consequences.

2. The Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission - TRC.

The CVR addressed all the dimensions of the armed conflict in Peru and all possible actors, not only the armed actors but also the social institutions, the judiciary and the communication media.

“This Report has put the truth in front of us, the truth that for so many years of republican life in Peru we have not wanted to see or recognize because it reveals very painful fractures and problems in our society: “the truth that the country needs to assume in all its gravity is that rural Peru, Andean and jungle, Quechua and Asháninka, peasant, poor and with little formal education bled for years without the rest of the Nation realizing the true dimension of the tragedy of that disregarded people within Peru”⁴. This tragedy ‘was not felt or assumed as their own by the rest of the country; this betrays the veiled racism and attitudes of contempt subsisting in Peruvian society’.⁵

According to the former president of the TRC, it can be said that the TRC found the following: That the number of fatalities - dead and missing - doubled the most pessimistic figure predicted before its work. In the worst-case scenario, there was talk of 35,000 fatalities; according to the TRC, almost 70,000 were estimated. According to Iris Jave of the Human Rights Institute of the PUCP: “In the report it was calculated that there were around 70,000; but in reality, there are approximately 200,000 people affected in different ways by the violation of their human rights”.

That the main -but not the only one- responsible was the Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL) for having initiated the violence, for having practised terrorism and, in the case of the Asháninka people, for having almost reached genocide; and for having caused the greatest number of deaths reported to the Commission.

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¹ Theidon Kimberly, “Entre prójimos. El conflicto armado interno y las políticas de reconciliación en el Perú”. IEP 2004.

² <https://www.gob.pe/790-inscripcion-en-el-registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv>

³ Ministerio de Justicia y DDHH – Consejo de Reparaciones. Registro Único de Víctimas. CIFRAS. Agosto – 2024 <http://www.ruv.gob.pe/CifrasRUV.pdf>

⁴ CVR. Informe final, versión abreviada, pág. 27.

⁵ CVR. Informe Final, Conclusiones Generales n.9.

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That the main -so not the only one- responsible was Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL) for having initiated the violence, for having practised terrorism and, in the case of the Asháninka people, having almost reached genocide; and for having caused the greatest number of deaths reported to the Commission. That the human rights violations committed by the subversive organisations, the police and the armed forces were not isolated acts. Such crimes - extrajudicial executions, disappearances, torture, forced displacement, recruitment of children, sexual violence and others - were massive and were perpetrated, in certain places and at certain times, in a systematic and/or generalised manner and constituted crimes against humanity.

That three civilian governments (Belaúnde, García) and the authoritarian government of Fujimori had a very grave moral and political responsibility in the process, for giving unrestricted powers to the armed forces to deal with subversion, omitting their duty to exercise democratic-constitutional control over them, and for giving them impunity for the crimes committed. That, without undermining the individual and institutional responsibilities that derive from the process, it took on the magnitude and gravity known due to the old and deep-rooted habits of exclusion, discrimination and racism in Peruvian society.

As we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the delivery of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission - TRC, it can be said that what the TRC pointed out survives, in spite of everything, as a set of pending tasks.⁶ The report has only been read by a small sector of the country; in the political world it has been met with indifference and rejection, which is why it is urgent to continue disseminating it.

Some of the TRC's recommendations were incorporated into the institutional architecture through the Comprehensive Reparations Plan, the High Level Multisectoral Commission, the Reparations Council and, more recently, the Council for Missing Persons. However, the victims do not feel 'repaired'. In the case of the **armed forces**, a reform of the armed forces was recommended, given that they were the second armed actor perpetrating human rights violations. "However, this reform has not taken place. They did not understand what that process meant, nor did they understand what they needed to change in order to connect with democracy."

The recommendations addressed **the education sector, the field of justice, institutional reforms** to change our authoritarian culture and disregard for one another, but not much progress has been made on these. "Nor have we made progress with the TRC's more institutional recommendations, such as the absence of the state. These are large territories where the state is not present". There are present other actors, such as drug traffickers and organised crime, who are there to resolve the life of the community, but it is not the state.

The former president of the TRC, on the occasion of last year's commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the delivery of the TRC Report, expressed pessimism about how little the recommendations have been taken on board. "Its concrete and immediate task was to bring about truth and justice for human rights violations committed during the internal armed conflict. On a broader horizon, its role was to provide the reborn democracy with the resources to build itself on more secure foundations. Truth, justice, memory, recognition, humanitarianism, are the names of these resources that were not used". "Much of what we are experiencing today can be understood as the echo of an unresolved past that: "Much of what we experience today can be understood as the echo of an unresolved past that finally caught up with us."⁷

⁶ EL BUHO, Entrevistas: 20 años del Informe CVR con avances en recomendaciones, pero con deficiencias y ausencia del Estado. Red de Medios Regionales del Perú. 03 de septiembre de 2023. <https://elbuho.pe/2023/09/entrevistas-20-anos-del-informe-cvr-con-avances-en-las-recomendaciones-pero-con-deficiencias-y-ausencia-del-estado/>

⁷ IDEHPUC. MEMORIA. Conferencia magistral en XVIII Encuentro de Derechos Humanos de IDEHPUCP. Salomón Lerner Febres. Presidente emérito del IDEHPUCP. Ex Presidente de la CVR. "Veinte años después: un país atrapado por su pasado". <https://idehpucp.pucp.edu.pe/revista-memoria/ponencia/cvr-veinte-anos-despues-un-pais-atrapado-por-su-pasado/>

3. The Loyola Ayacucho Centre: Forgiveness and Reconciliation for a Culture of Peace

The Ayacucho region is where the violence began and there is the highest number of victims; it was the region hardest hit during the internal armed conflict - IAC. According to the CVR, this region accounted for 40% of the total number of deaths and disappearances: 96,731; 45% of the missing persons, i.e. 9,000 of the more than 20,000 disappeared.

The TRC proposed reconciliation as a re-founding or reconstruction of the social pact between society and the state. It considered it important to differentiate between forgiveness and reconciliation (el perdón / la reconciliación). **Reconciliation would be:** "to re-establish the fundamental links between the members of the community, after having overcome the conflict that destroyed them", "the gratuitous, asymmetrical and unique act of **paying for a guilt**" which "allows the victim to relive the past - however painful it may be - **in order to overcome it**".

The TRC proposed three dimensions of reconciliation: **a political dimension**, which implies reconciliation between state and society; **a social dimension**, which is a reconciliation of institutions with civil society and in particular with historically neglected groups; and an **interpersonal reconciliation**, which would be reconciliation between members of a community who were confronted during the conflict.⁸

He proposed that the promotion of memory and actions leading to reconciliation should be a shared task between the state and civil society. In the Ayacucho region, various initiatives have been carried out by the state and civil society, politically, socially and economically.

The experience of the Centro Loyola Ayacucho-CLA has to do with memory, forgiveness and reconciliation; it has had a greater initiative in terms of interpersonal reconciliation because it understands that 'the city must be built from within', a society cannot be built without citizens, or with citizens confronting each other, with rage and desire for revenge, which are the after-effects of the post-war period. The Loyola Ayacucho Centre also considered the political and social dimension, linking neglected groups and victims with civil society and the state.⁹

The Loyola Ayacucho Centre is an institution of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), which began its work in August 2004, a year after the CVR report was delivered, in response to the Pronouncement made by the Society of Jesus in order to support the CVR's recommendations with all their work.

The Loyola Ayacucho Centre is part of the commitment to restore peaceful coexistence, to promote a Culture of Peace based on the awareness that the population of Ayacucho was going through a traumatic situation, as the acts of violence were not only in the past, but were, and still are, still being experienced in the present, and are negatively affecting people's lives, interpersonal relationships, collective existence, the social network and the common good.

Among the processes developed by the CLA are:

- The ESPERE - Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation.
- The training of young Peace Builders.
- Leadership training and accompaniment for organisations of people displaced by the internal armed conflict.
- International forums: All the memories, all of them.
- Conversations: All the memories, all of them. With the World Café methodology.
- Transformative Dialogues.
- Conversations: All the memories, all of them. With the Restorative Circles methodology.

The following is a brief description of each of the activities:

Die ESPERE – Training Programmes for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Each ESPERE consists of 11 workshops of 3 hours each. Each participant processes on their inner pain and values in order to heal their wounds and grow as a person. Forgiveness does not mean impunity, but liberation from a burden, from an intense pain. It benefits the one who grants it. Forgiveness demands truth, memory - and does not deny justice, but does not put it in the foreground.

⁸ CVR. Informe final. Tomo IX. Lima. 2003. Página 24.

⁹ CVR. Informe final. Tomo IX. Lima. 2003. Página 24.

At the beginning it was difficult to convince the victims of the CAI to participate the ESPERE, they confused forgiveness with impunity; after participating they were grateful for the experience.

E.g. One woman, when the bodies of 5 family members who were killed by the military were handed over to her in an act that proved to be outside the armed conflict, publicly stated that she had processed the forgiveness, she was forgiving. She publicly stated that she had processed forgiveness, she forgave because she did not want to leave an inheritance of resentment and desire for revenge to her children, but that forgiveness is not impunity, so her case was being processed in the Judiciary.

The ESPERE consider three types of Reconciliation: 1) Of coexistence. 2) Of coexistence. 3) Of communion.

Young Peacebuilders.

With regard to the CAI, there are various positions that promote different types of memory, from the memories of the victims, the memories of the actors in the conflict, the memory of civil society, official memory etc. It is not a question of 'memory', but of different memories, and even of 'battles for memory'. It happens that such an affected population often remains silent about what happened. Working with memory helps to put ideas in order, to heal pains, to situate oneself in the face of the conflict, to develop processes of forgiveness and reconciliation with a new outlook on the future.

After several years of training adult Peace Builders, the CLA decided to train young Peace Builders, with the main objective that the young people learn about the TRC document (the most serious report on what happened), that they work on the themes of identity, truth, memory, the importance of reparation and especially the psycho-emotional, human and merciful accompaniment of the victims of the CAI who to this day continue to receive the remains of their loved ones who continue to be rescued from the mass graves.

The young people did not experience the violence themselves, but they experience and live through the aftermath, especially in their families.

P.e. Testimony of a young Peacebuilder: "We have all been affected by political violence, my family too; I had not taken this issue so seriously, I have relatives who are victims and do not want to talk about it; I remember that they talked about it when I was a child. My grandmother's only two brothers had died, another uncle became demented. Neither in my work, nor in my school, nor in the university was this subject touched upon... The visit to the places of memory raised my awareness."

In addition to accompanying the victims, the young people disseminate the CVR's information, train other people through market stands, talks, events, psycho-emotional accompaniment of relatives in the handover of remains, at memory vigils and the transfer of ossuaries and become guides for other people by making known the places of memory in Ayacucho; they identify the places, have signposted them, and organise routes to guide local people and visitors with a serious reflection on what happened.

Promotion of leadership and accompaniment of displaced people's organisations.

We consider displaced people to be those who, because of the violence, had to leave their homes, their families, their goods, their economic and educational activities, their neighbours, to flee the conflict zones and rural areas and move to the capitals of the region's provinces. We work specifically with the Associations of Displaced Families in the districts of the province of Huamanga and in the districts of Tambo and San Miguel in the province of La Mar, as they have the largest displaced population. It is estimated that around one million people were displaced in Peru between 1980 and 1992, displaced not only within Ayacucho but also to other provinces of the country.

For several years, the CLA carried out training activities with the displaced population to strengthen their capacity for agency and leadership, as well as to strengthen their organisations so that they could interact with the government and make their needs, demands and rights heard. The slogan that accompanied us was 'from victims to citizens'. Workshops, traineeships, public forums, as well as the linking of organisations at national and regional level with the National Human Rights Coordinating Committee and other civil society and state organisations were developed, strengthening networking for their benefit.

International Forums: All the Reports, all of them.

Two international forums were held. Public forums that brought together people of different religions, ages, social groups, educational levels, among others.

The first with the objective of a greater approximation to historical memory, to the role of memory in the processes of reconciliation. A total of 240 people attended. The speakers were representatives from Colombia from CINEP and the National Centre for Historical Memory. Also a Sri Lankan representative of the GIZ PROPAZ project.

The importance of public policies of memory (which must be led by the state), which are indispensable for reconciliation processes, was discussed. It was acknowledged that these processes often count on the indifference of society (triumph of the NO in the plebiscite of the Peace Agreement in Colombia). The dispersed nature of memory practices in Peru, the difficulties of coordination, consensus and obtaining resources were discussed. As well as the power of art to make memories visible and transmit them with creativity and impact for society.

The complexity and conflictive nature of memories was seen, as well as the importance of fostering dialogue between diverse memories, in the search for understandings of the past that are encompassing and inclusive of diversity.

The second International Forum was attended by 159 people from Colombia, Argentina, Guatemala and Peru. The main objective was to reflect on the gestation of public policies of Memory of national scope. The regional government of Ayacucho presented 57 legislative initiatives, especially measures for attention to victims, as well as memory measures, especially the construction of the Sanctuary for Memory in around La Hoyada. There was discussion on the need to assume that the processes of memory policies imply a gradual construction that can take several years before specific measures are implemented. There was also a reflection on Art and Memory. The importance of generating state efforts, joint civil-military efforts, and civil society efforts was discussed. All the progress achieved around Memory is due to the social mobilisation of the population; state decisions have been preceded by an important effort on the part of civil society.

Conversations: All the memories, all of them. With the World Café methodology.

A new step was taken with the Conversatories, which provided the possibility of face-to-face dialogue between representatives of different types of memory. The first two were carried out with the World Café methodology, which allowed dialogue on issues that affected the participants, and where they gained access to a different knowledge and understanding, activated by the exchange that allowed them to know what the other thinks. Dynamic conversation through tables with a small number of participants and with four pre-defined questions that were taken up by all, addressed on a rotating basis, with participants moving from table to table. The participants interacted in different groups; at the end everyone had discussed all the topics with different people.

The participants were: leaders of organisations affected by the CAI; direct victims; relatives of victims; displaced persons; army graduates; army officers; former members of armed groups who had served their sentences and who wished to contribute to peace processes; civil society members committed to human rights; and some people with responsibilities in state spaces working for peace.

Café Mundial was a good methodology for dealing with such a complex subject as memory, and also as it deals with traumatic events. In a safe environment, spaces of trust were created in a small format. Memory issues were discussed, but not personal experiences, there was rapprochement, respect and guaranteed listening. The facilitators in each group channelled the questions that created horizontality, overcoming the relationship between experts and non-experts.

Questions addressed: (1) [Can we dialogue between different memories, experiences, roles played during the 80s and 90s?](#) (2) [Who forms the nation \("la patria"/ "el Peru"\) and how do we include everyone?](#) (3) [How do we understand forgiveness \(el perdón\)?](#) (4) [How do we build a Culture of Peace and a democratic society with many and different memories?](#) This was a very enriching space for everyone because of the experiences of transformation of attitudes that were achieved.

Although they did not want to touch on personal issues, it could not be avoided that e.g. in the final ritual, a woman to whom SL murdered her father, stood up and referred to the ex SL representative, and rebuked him with tears in her eyes for the death of her father; but she said that she had attended because she wanted to take new steps in her life and not to live with so much pain and resentment. He said to him: "Your name is the same as my Dad's" and they hugged.

The transformation that is achieved is not understood as erasing the past but as assuming the past in another way, as a liberation and even more as a recovery of the person's capacity for agency, (the capacity to act according to internal deliberation and of one's own free will). The participants were then offered a follow-up, in some cases, psychosocial support was provided.

The second workshop was also developed using the World Café methodology. Most of the participants were from Ayacucho: displaced people, relatives of the disappeared, army graduates, members of self-defence committees, university professors. Some people from Lima also attended, a former member of SL and two former members of MRTA, a military man, a son of SL. The former members of subversive organisations were people who were released after long prison sentences, who expressed repentance and who have abandoned the discourse of violence. Also participating were a member of the CNDDHH and a delegation from Guatemala that included two former guerrilla fighters, a former military officer, a member of human rights organisations and two from the Civil Peace Service (Servicio Civil para la Paz).

It was necessary to overcome misgivings and resistance, to confront potential conflicts or disagreements. The round tables answered the following questions: * Is a dialogue of memories possible in the current context? * Can we say that Peru has made progress in terms of dialogue of memories and restoration? What do we understand by restoration? * How can or should we contribute to a dialogue of memories in a process of restoration? * In your personal experience, do you feel restored? When can we say that the population has been restored?

No conclusions were drawn because the aim was to assess the experience of the dialogue, of the conversation itself. The majority evaluated the convenience of this type of dialogue and the fact that they were able to appreciate different points of view in such a complex experience. They recognised the need and urgency to advance in the dialogue between memories in order to move forward on the path of reconciliation. Support for psychosocial care was also appreciated. It was recognised that dialogue cannot replace the responsibility of each person during the period of violence, and the issue of justice was valued. The community issue was highlighted as a favourable space for the processes.

Transformative Dialogues.

The CLA process had a progression in the approaches it implemented. First, the Forum as a public event where ideas are shared with a [wide audience](#), not necessarily interpersonal interaction. Then the Conversatory model with the World Café methodology, which allows [interaction in small discussion circles](#). Then the organisation of [transformative dialogues](#).

The transformative dialogue is the meeting of divergent memories, which is more complex as it involves divergent memories between two people. It took place between a victim and a person who represents the perpetrator sector. The creative dialogue really takes place between the different with the different. It is an encounter where one can experience the change of a way of defining or valuing a situation by listening attentively to the other person. In preparation for the transformative dialogue, most of the participants took part in the process of the Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation-ESPERE, which allowed them to reflect on what had happened and to develop their own processes of forgiveness. This dialogue was able to gradually open people's closed-mindedness, promote a change, a broader vision, especially for the leaders, who learned to listen to others and to accept that there are other memories, all of them valid, and this will help them to establish transformative dialogues with other increasingly larger groups, as they learn to develop an attitude of compassion, of wanting to listen and understand.

Several experiences of transformative dialogues were carried out: between former army graduates and relatives of disappeared persons; others between a former army graduate and a displaced person; another between a displaced person and a *rondero*; or a displaced person and a former SL militant. It is important to bear in mind that most of these people have multiple affectations, e.g. in addition to being a displaced person, they may be a relative of a disappeared person and have suffered torture.

These dialogues are controlled processes, taking care that they do not harm the participants and that they are fully aware of what they are doing. It also helps them to recognise their own internal processes. Preparation is important, 6 sessions are held with each person separately beforehand so that each person can work out what they want to say to the other person; also, if they choose to ask for forgiveness or to forgive, they work out that process and look for some symbol of reconciliation.

E.g. In one of the transformative dialogues, they decided to plant two saplings in the area where the Sanctuary of Memory is being built. After a brief ritual in which each person expressed their desire for forgiveness and reconciliation, both came forward to place flowers on the cross representing the disappeared father.

Conversation: All the Memories, all of them. With the methodology of Restorative Circles.

This is a new step towards reconciliation itself, in which victims and perpetrators participate actively from their experiences, seeking restoration. It is a comprehensive reintegration strategy not only to look at the case but to take into account the needs of the victims, the family, the community, with the assumption that 'when people are willing to walk towards their conflicts, recognise their differences and dialogue together, magic happens'.

Three Restorative Circles were held, two with diverse participants from the city, who did not know each other, and one with participants who live in the rural area and know each other, and in Quechua. The Restorative Circles were facilitated by a specialist facilitator, Duke Duchscherer. This methodology requires two moments: the first is the 'pre-circle' in which four groups were formed (victims, those who took up arms, those who were discharged from the army, civil society); initially these groups were very suspicious of each other, so we spoke with them beforehand, and they accepted the dialogue to tell their truth and listen to the truth of the other. Each group constructed a truth about what happened. The second moment is 'the circle', no longer separated, but all in the same room, the person who wishes to tell what he or she holds as the truth and chooses another member of the group to listen to him or her; all participants tell their story and are listened to. The pre-circle was conducted in one day and the circle in two days; it took place in a residential regime with various activities in the empty spaces.

The participants appreciated this experience as transformative because they were able to listen and be listened to, because of the closeness and the time shared, because of the deep listening with the technique of non-violent communication, because no tense or conflictive aspects were omitted. They recognised that, although the circle does not solve the problems, they were relieved to feel listened to.

4. The current situation and reconciliation as a task.

The experiences described above have taken place over the last 20 years. It has been a path of learning new forms of intervention; forgiveness and reconciliation are valued as a path to peace. It is recognised that memory is not uniform, but plural, potentially conflictive, in many cases there is a 'battle for memory'. For this reason, the search for reconciliation must [recognise the different memories](#); this implies dialogue, encounter, spaces of trust.

According to various reports, especially from the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos-IEP, Peru is currently experiencing a very serious political crisis, and its authorities have a high level of disapproval: 80% disapproval of President Dina Boluarte, and 91% disapproval of Congress. This is compounded by widespread corruption and the fact that 75% of the population feels unsafe in their neighbourhoods, with informality and organised crime gaining more and more ground. It is an educational, social and political crisis that endangers democracy.

The Bishops in their January message said: 'Peru is experiencing a series of crises that affect social life, the economy, politics and above all ethics. The values that founded the Nation are in crisis, involving many of those who today exercise power during a growing authoritarianism' (n.3). And they called for transformative action: 'Let us not allow ourselves to be overcome by pessimism, because the Peruvian people are fighters, creative, enterprising and capable of great deeds, as they have shown throughout our national history. It is time to show our great moral reserve'. (n.23) 'We must find our way by walking together, co-responsibly, in search of the common good'. (n.18).

It is therefore a gigantic, urgent and essential challenge to promote a culture of dialogue and non-violence, to foster a Culture of Encounter, a Culture of Mutual Care. Whatever we do, however small it may be, adds up to strengthen this current of peace-building. Religions have an indispensable role to play in this, since we have committed ourselves to work, believers hand in hand with non-believers, with people of good will, for justice, peace, the defence of nature, equality and the recognition of diversity. Prioritise what unites us in search of the common good.

Religions cannot remain in worship, locked up in our temples, but rather we have to take on the drama of humanity today, the change of era that is disconcerting us all, we have to contribute to building an intercultural, interreligious, just and fraternal society. 'The struggle for peace includes psychological, social, political and economic aspects. Our faith in God must be so deep, our inner life so active, that what little we do is light for others to take up the baton of neighbourly love, of a new brotherhood.

As CLA we will continue to deepen our experience with new elements, because **we are no longer dealing with the post-international armed conflict, but with its aftermath**, with social and political disintegration and violence, with the growth of organised crime, with 'polarisation, populism and post-truth'. The experience we have developed will be useful, but as the challenges are new, we have to be more creative in seeking and finding what helps the most.

In this search we are inspired by the National Dialogue for Peace that Mexico is carrying out, from the Society of Jesus, with the Conference of Bishops, the Conference of Religious in coordination with other churches, setting the country in motion with a National Agenda for Peace."¹⁰

Some quotes that might help:

In No. 30 it specifies that "Peace is a path to building social conditions so that the good coexistence of people with their environment is possible. These are multiple actions that address the cultural and structural causes of violence and in this way make life on the planet sustainable. To achieve peace, three elements need to be addressed: **social network, justice and security.**"

In No. 31. "The social network is built from the relationships between **people, institutions and the environment**, and thus make possible community life located in a socio-environmental context."

In No. 32. "**Justice** is an ethical principle that seeks the balance of these relationships so that everyone has what they need to live together in peace; It also implies the legal tools and mechanisms for the **recognition and protection of rights.**"

In No. 33. "Security is the process of establishing, strengthening and protecting democratic civil order, eliminating threats of violence in the population and allowing safe and peaceful coexistence. It is considered a public good and implies the effective safeguarding of the human rights inherent to the person, especially the **right to life, personal integrity, the inviolability of the home and freedom of movement.**"

In No. 34. "This is a fundamental triad for peacebuilding: on the one hand, the existence of **participatory and organized communities** that are the expression of a healthy social network; on the other hand, have mechanisms to address conflicts, through an **efficient justice system**; and, finally, have strategies for the **prevention, investigation and punishment of crimes**, typical of citizen security. Addressing these three factors for peace is the task of all citizens and all sectors of society.

"In the face of the objective cruelty of the problems that afflict Peru today, hope is a duty."¹¹

Muchas gracias por su atención.

Carmen de los Ríos Baertl. Septiembre, 03 de 2024.

¹⁰ Agenda Nacional de Paz-Diálogo Nacional por la Paz-Núcleo por la Paz: Conf. del Episcopado Mexicano. Conf. de Superiores Mayores de Religiosos y Religiosas de México. Dimensión Episcopal para los Laicos. Provincia Mexicana de la Compañía de Jesús. México, Septiembre 2023.

¹¹ Danilo Martucelli, IEP. Video de exposición, situar el cursor en 3.55.00.
<https://www.facebook.com/institutodeestudiosperuanos/videos/1233378807681902>