



## A Reflection on Peace-building and Reconciliation

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I have been asked to share a reflection on “Peace-Building and Reconciliation”, part of the process that we have begun in preparation for our XV General Chapter.

Looking at my own life experience and reflecting on the questions that we were given, I took everything into my prayer. The name of an NGO (non-government organization) that comes from Cataluña, a northeastern region of Spain and is only a few blocks from our house in Athens, kept coming to me during this prayer. The name of the group is **“Provocando la Paz”** (Provoking Peace). This group works in many parts of the world, offering lodging, food, medical assistance, accompanying pregnant women, and vulnerable families. They do very simple things, urged on by their convictions and goodwill, using the funds they get from donations.

Ever since I met them, their name and their actions have made me question myself because they give me a different perspective than I had formerly. In everything they do, there is a concrete and active dimension of building a peaceful society. It is a way of saying **Peace is built from vulnerability, in the fragility of everyday life:** a secure space, food, a kitchen organized so that everyone collaborates, companionship in going to the doctor, looking out for the children, and concern for interpersonal relationships. These simple actions lead to life and to hope. But – someone must take the first step, must take the initiative.

To begin the process of peace-building, I must **go to my inner self**—my humanity— and **look with love** at my limits, my wounds, my weaknesses, my strengths, my hopes, and, my dreams. I need to **recognize** that there is violence within me, a desire for power and, at the same time, the desire for security; there is hope, faith, and the capacity for love, ...in other words I need to feel and **to touch my own "humanity"**.

For that humanity is the "way" to the other, to others...the path that Jesus also chose to travel. **The greatest expression of vulnerability in Jesus was his incarnation.** Jesus

had compassion, loved people. In each situation, **he acted from within and expressed what was in his heart**. And so, his relationships were life-generating because his whole being was **unified and present** to the other person. He knew how to reach those who were on the margins, approaching the excluded, recognizing their dreams and their needs. **He discovered in the other a human being and touched their humanity!**

To be a full and focused presence to my sisters and brothers, I need **an honest knowledge of myself, of my vulnerabilities; I need to listen to my conscience, to take care of myself. I need to accept myself**. Then I can respond from my deepest self; I can meet the humanity of the other, I can walk with the other and be present to them.

When I have **conflicts and violence** within, it will be difficult for me to recognize the other as a human being like myself. It will be hard to be compassionate with others or with myself. A saint once said that we should be **attentive and listen with the ears of the heart**. So, I need to cultivate attention and listen to myself and others. I need to become reconciled with myself, the other, a sister of my community, or anyone with whom God invites me to share the Good News of His Gospel.

When my humanity becomes **presence and compassion**, I have taken the first steps towards **reconciliation**. We could add that the path to communion begins here. In the honest acceptance of my frailties and wounds, the path to peace begins. There we can also discover the spark of "sacredness" which is hidden in every human being, of divine indwelling, the life of the Trinity, Fr. Arnold would say.