



## Universal Prayers 2010

# Restorative Justice Week 2010 Reflexions Past, Present and Future

### INTRODUCTION or BRIEF THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

This year's theme encourages us to reflect on the past, present and future of restorative justice in our faith communities as well as in our personal salvation within the broader context of Christian history of salvation.

Before the world was created, there was chaos: **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness.”**<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning of the salvation history, God has wanted to reinstate order in the world, and God created men and women in his image, so that together they might care for it: **“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’”**<sup>2</sup> God gave humans the responsibility to live peacefully with each other and their Creator.

However, this did not last. Adam and Eve broke their covenant. Cain even killed his brother Abel, but the Lord forgave him, **“But the LORD said to him, ‘Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.’ Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.”**<sup>3</sup>

God's love for his creation is steadfast and unfailing, and with this love come promises of joy: **“If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you**

---

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:1–4, New International Version Bible, Biblica: 2002

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:28, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 4:15, *ibid.*

**today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:**<sup>4</sup>

In this way, God has always remained faithful over the course of history. Even though humankind keeps missing the mark, God's kindness always restores the balance. He ends up sending his Son as a living sacrifice to save His people: **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father..."**<sup>5</sup> This is the restorative attitude we must embrace.

As St. John the Evangelist wrote in Revelation: **"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God..."**<sup>6</sup>

Through Christ, all creation was saved and faith was restored, but we still have to make this a part of our daily lives. This brief overview of the history of salvation allows us to penetrate more deeply into the dynamics of restorative justice. During the Last Supper, as he washed his disciples' feet, Christ gave his great exhortation: **"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 28:1–2, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> John 1:14, *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 21:1–2, *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> John 13:34–35, *ibid.*



## OPENING PRAYER

God, who has sent us your Son to save us and to make of us your adopted children, look upon those you love as their father. Inspire us to live each day by the principle of restorative justice. Help us keep from throwing the first stone and remember we are to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. In this way we participate in your amazing history of salvation. As we believe in Christ, grant us true freedom and eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Let us pray for all victims of crime. Lord, hear their cries, which too often go unheard. Give them the strength and courage to face their daily lives and actively participate in your salvation. **R / Grant them your grace.**
- Let us pray for the members of our faith communities. Lord, revive in us the desire to live by the command to love as you have taught us. Give us the strength follow your example and reach out to the victims and offenders without passing judgement. **R / Grant us your grace.**
- Let us pray for the offenders. Lord, hear their longing to change and instil in them the desire to mend what they have broken by their hurtful actions. Give them the humility to acknowledge their need to repent and to have concern for their neighbours. **R / Grant them your grace.**
- Let us pray for all those who refuse to live a life grounded in love. Lord, inspire them to seek ways to give of themselves for others. Open their hearts to the true value of restorative justice and the actions that flow from it. **R / Grant them your grace.**
- Let us pray for all non-believers. Lord, you know what is in their hearts; open their hearts to the principle of restorative justice so they may stand up for it. **R / Grant them your grace.**
- Let us pray for the practitioners and caregivers. Lord, show them the path to the truth and healing of lives. **R / Grant them your grace.**

Compassionate God, have mercy upon us so that we may truly be part of your plan of salvation. Let all people of faith come together and bring about your reign which in the past, present and future is built upon the principles of restorative justice.

Let us repeat the prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace;  
that where there is hatred, I may bring love;  
that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness;  
that where there is discord, I may bring harmony;  
that where there is error, I may bring truth;  
that where there is doubt, I may bring faith;  
that where there is despair, I may bring hope;  
that where there are shadows, I may bring light;  
that where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted;  
to understand, than to be understood;  
to love, than to be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.  
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.  
It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our prayers tie directly into the Christian history of salvation as we actively contribute to it at any given moment in time. There have been many accomplishments in restorative justice in the past. Today, we are also making great strides and, to the extent that we are able to continue, we will have the joy of seeing God's grace reflected in the daily lives of all people of good will.