

The cross

*is the ultimate evidence
that there is no length
the love of God will go
to effect reconciliation.*



R. Kent Hughes

Reconciliation means something
different to every person,
There is no American standard version.
Reconciliation speaks to many people,
It could even take place on a steeple.
Reconciliation is like a promise . . .
Because you have to be honest.

Nathan Lindner

Reconciliation — what a topic!

So many possibilities. Is one reconciling with one's self, with life circumstances, with another person or persons, or perhaps a mixture of these? The process needs a lot of work and might require help and grace. Ultimately, even a little bit of resolution/healing is progress.

In the Book of Job there is a wonderful story of this process. Job is inspirational in how he deals with loss, although he complains a bit when his support group (friends) doesn't support him.

The dreadful end of Jesus' earthly life is a reassurance. No matter what bad, painful or ghastly life circumstances one might have to endure, Jesus experienced it first and will understand one's cries for help.

What if reconciliation with others doesn't work out? A truly honest, humble effort on one's part will have to be enough, but at least that is accomplished.

Mary Utschig

Healing Prayer at Bedtime

Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, go back into my memory as I sleep. Every hurt that has ever been done to me . . . heal that hurt. Every hurt that I have ever caused to another person . . . heal that hurt. All the relationships that have been damaged in my whole life that I'm not aware of . . . heal those relationships.

But Lord, if there is anything that I need to do – if I need to go to a person because he is still suffering from my hand, bring to my awareness that person.

I choose to forgive, and I ask to be forgiven. Remove whatever bitterness that may be in my heart, Lord, and fill the empty spaces with your love. Thank you, Jesus.

Spoiler Alert

I don't think my sister will ever forgive me, but when I was four, I saw mommy kissing Santa Claus and wrapping presents and decorating the tree and finishing off the fortified egg nog with rock-hard cookies left for the big guy.

Whoa - this was too good a secret to keep secret! "Hey Mary, wake up! Guess what?

Mommy and Daddy are Santa Claus!
FOR REAL!"

Her absolute refusal to get out of bed and come see for herself filled my little heart with such guilt about spilling the beans, that to this day, I wonder if she still believes the magic.

I really hope she does.

Margie Kickbush

What Is Reconciliation and Who Needs It?

The question is very pertinent. A few words come to mind: balance, forgiveness, healing, growth.

Financial people talk about “reconciling the books.” They look at the *income* and look at the *expenses*: too little income, too many expenses and bankruptcy looms.

Families need reconciliation. As children, when some argument occurred, when feet were stomped and tears were shed, more often than not, our parents made us say “sorry.” Sometimes that even included a hug.

The Church, as institution, also has needed to seek reconciliation. A few years ago, the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) began a program called “Reconciled in Christ.” The Church acknowledged that it had sinned in its relationship to homosexual people, treating them with judgment and condemnation. The Church confessed its sin and asked for forgiveness.

The Catholic Church, as institution, has also often failed to see Christ in various groups: homosexuals, divorced, women, people of color, the “laity.”

We have a sacrament that goes by three names: Confession, Penance, and Reconciliation. That’s because each name describes one aspect of the sacrament. *Confession* tells us that we need to acknowledge that we have sinned and own our sin. *Penance* tells us that it isn’t enough to simply say we are sorry; we need to take responsibility for the consequence of our sin. *Reconciliation* tells us the “end game” of the sacrament: sin has put a wedge between us and God, the sacrament removes that wedge and heals our relationship with God.

Our country also needs reconciliation. These past four years, in particular, have revealed a great deal about our own country. “On paper” (the Constitution) we look great. But history has revealed that time and time again, the country did not live up to the words of our Constitution. When the Declaration of Independence declared that “All men are created equal and endowed with certain unalienable rights” – as noble as that sounds, at the time it did not refer to people of color, Native Americans or women. We are still trying to live up to our ideals. We are a work in progress.

Reconciliation also invites dialogue. In true dialogue, participants learn to *listen*, deeply, to the other’s point, not so

much as to be able to retort but to *understand*. When dialogue is genuine, something significant can happen. The participants begin from their own position and often end up in an entirely different conclusion born out of both positions – not a compromise, but a new insight that is better.

Reconciliation means to seek balance where it is needed. It means to ask for forgiveness when we have failed, and to offer forgiveness when we have been wronged. It means allowing healing to take place. And when there is mutual respect and genuine dialogue, we make room for growth.

June Wessa

. . . to seek balance
. . . to ask for forgiveness
. . . to offer forgiveness
. . . to allow healing
to take place

We will learn to live together as brothers or perish as fools.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Recollections of First and Following Reconciliations

My thoughts on Reconciliation went first to helping my son Isaac prepare for his First Reconciliation. I leaned on Cindy Lieb, our Religious Ed. Director, now in Heaven w/our Lord. She shared one reason why First Reconciliation is celebrated before First Communion vs. later (like fifth grade when I was growing up). Her simple explanation started something like this: "You're making friends again." I vividly remember the hallway conversation where she put her thumb and finger together and moved to uniting her other thumb and finger. Simple, but powerful. She went on to explain it's like going to a party or feast. You want to be on good terms with the host before eating with them. AND one of the biggest parties our kids (and we) get to experience is the party/feast of Eucharist. Being on good terms with Jesus is crucial.

Then I sought input from Isaac, Eli and Nathan. When prompting them to remember their First Reconciliation, they were all a bit foggy but did dig back to come up with a few feelings and thoughts: "confessing to the priest . . . and the priest told me

to do something after to reconcile with others or do an act of kindness." "We wrote stuff down ahead of time about what we were going to say, and I remember what I confessed." "I was nervous before, but relieved after, and I received a red 'stone' heart as a symbol of forgiveness" (which we still have at our prayer table); "going in confused even though prepared; my burden was lifted after, and I felt the presence of Jesus more in my life."

Finally, I thought back to my own experiences with the Sacrament. One of my Reconciliation memories was as a young adult. We had a young adult group at St. Catherine's, and one of the members arranged for a priest to lead us in a prayer service and listen to our confessions. I remember that my admission was something I didn't think I'd tell anyone. While embarrassing and hurtful to others, it did feel important to release this secret. I have not committed that sin again. While not an easy thing to seek reconciliation, I am happy that our faith provides this opportunity.

Renee Lindner

Past Hurt to Reconciliation

One day not too long ago I got the most heartfelt apology that really touched my heart from a family member. It was unexpected and made such a difference.

Her daughter and son-in-law were upset by some suggestions of support for his care that I mentioned to them. They were not in a place to hear these ideas. They thought that it meant that I thought he would never get better. This family member took it upon herself to tell me their feelings.

As I listened to her, the tears rolled down my eyes and I began to sob. I was so hurt because my words were not at all meant to be hurtful, and it pained me to think that was how they were taken. Even as she spoke, I knew she meant well and wanted to make the situation better, but by doing it her words were hurting me deeply.

I was surprised by my own reaction. I didn't lash out at her. I just listened carefully. I made a few comments but knew in my heart that all of these words of hers were coming from a place of her own hurt for that part of the family. Yes, the words hurt me in some ways, but they didn't really touch my core because I knew my intentions were good and meant to be supportive.

The day she called me to apologize was a real gift. She told me she should not have said the things to me that she had, and could I forgive her? I told her because I know her heart, she had been forgiven long ago, and I accepted her apology.

I see this relationship now as deeper than before and a test for each of us – a test I think we both passed.

Mary Miller

Forgiveness - a Personal Choice

*In the end,
reconciliation
is a spiritual
process*

*It has to
happen in
the hearts
and minds
of people.*

Nelson Mandela

I used to think that forgiveness and reconciliation are the same, words that are interchangeable, but now I realize they are not. Both involve the welcoming of a person who has acted unfairly. But there is a difference.

Forgiveness is one's personal choice to give up resentment and bitterness to develop a friendlier attitude towards the person. Reconciliation always involves the other person or persons and is conditioned on the cooperation of each person to change. So when the other person is unwilling to reconcile, only forgiveness remains.

Forgiveness was not an easy process for me. But forgiveness was the only thing that moved me from depression and anxiety to a healing that restored peace of mind and the beginnings of a life of hope and joy. Why it took me so long to forgive is a mystery to me. I wondered how others seemed to put aside anger and hurt so easily while I hung on to it for so long. Because when I finally was able to forgive, I experienced overwhelming harmony. Maybe it was because others had reconciled their differences. How did I achieve forgiveness? My only answer is persistent prayer and a change in my prayer — not to change the other person but to change me.

Trudy Ranallo

Does anyone who attended Catholic grade school in pre-Vatican II days remember being gathered once a week to “go to confession?” As we stood in line, we were encouraged to prepare ourselves. That meant to start recalling your sins and the number of times you committed them. Was it 3 times, 5 times, or 10 times I disobeyed my parents during the week? Did I tell a lie 2 times, 4 times Did bragging count?

Perhaps that memory or similar stories have so captured the concept of the Sacrament of Reconciliation that its gifts have been discarded or ignored by some Catholics.

I was blessed to move from that grade school experience to a counseling experience in high school. Our high school chaplains knew us well enough that we could identify ourselves in the confessional and REALLY talk about our daily lives and work on growing our faith.

And so it was that when I was teaching religious ed. for middle schoolers, I had that blessing to call

What is the ONE thing that is keeping me from loving God as I want?

upon. The cluster parishes invited us to a joint Reconciliation Service. In my class were three members of one family who had recently been baptized, and we dutifully gathered at the church.

Part way through the service, I noticed that “my kids” were getting nervous. Questioning them, I discovered that they couldn't remember ever having learned about the Sacrament, and here they were being encouraged to “go to confession.” We went into the church vestibule and talked, and I tried to give a “crash course” on the gifts of Reconciliation and told them I would precede them into the confessional to prepare the priest for their “first confession.” “But what would I say?” the oldest one asked. I told them that I always thought of the ONE thing that was keeping me from loving God as I really wanted. That girl decided to receive the Sacrament and followed me into the confessional. She came out with a beautiful smile on her face. Father Ralph told me later that her confession had been one of the most meaningful he had heard in a long time.

Bernadette Davel

Choosing Reconciliation



We all carry the hurts and pressures of life, perhaps now more than ever. And for the most part, we are able to weather these storms. But when heavy hardship comes to us, how is it that we are to be faithful followers of our Lord Christ?

History tells us about the indiscriminate killing during the Second World War. Fear and hatred came to the English city of Coventry after a particularly punishing bombing run leveled large sections of the town and severely damaged Coventry Cathedral. It is hard for those of us not born into that time to imagine the emotions that arose. To have innocent women, children and men, members of one's family and friends, treated as military targets. And yet that was exactly what happened.

This is a big story, but there are two important stories to bring forward. First is that after the smoke cleared, there was found a smattering of the original medieval spikes that had held the roof of that cathedral together for some 500 years. A priest wired those nails together – pieces that no longer served their purpose – and bound them together into the shape of a cross. In effect, giving the sorrow found in them over to the Lord.

Secondly, consider that it didn't take too long for the Cathedral staff to discern a spiritual way forward through that time of great hardship. For them, there was only one way to galvanize a Christian response to this tragedy – only one way to elevate the very soul of that City, to lift the hearts of Coventry, which had been laid so low – to empower the people to pick themselves up and dip into

the power of the Almighty to begin the task of rebuilding their lives. The Provost of the Cathedral, Richard Howard, did one simple thing: he had the words, "Father Forgive," carved on the wall behind what remained of the altar.

Let us bind the hurtful elements of our lives and bind them onto the Cross of Christ and ask for the strength to release them

Two simple words. How in the world could those 13 small letters help when the people of Coventry had suffered so greatly? And, as the congregation gathered before that altar during worship – for them to be asked to look upon those words as they came forward for communion – after all they had lost? To forgive that which had inhumanely wreaked so much havoc? It was too much for many. Not hard to understand.

It took some time, but then something wonderful began to happen. Those words, "Father Forgive," began to work on the souls of the people who continually gathered to worship. What parishioners found on the other side, or maybe better to say – *who* they found on the other side of for-

giveness – startled them, though they should not have been. Those two words, "Father Forgive," so harsh at first, rekindled the light of Christ in each of them. Individual accounts from this time abound. The people started to gain strength as they released the fear and hatred that those bombs had cruelly driven into their hearts. It simply was no longer consonant with being a people of faith. Coventry bound up the fear and hatred they rightly felt – it simply was no longer consonant with being a people of faith. And in my imagination, they bound it all up into the shape of a cross, like those nails from the cathedral roof, and laid it before that altar, in front of those words, "Father Forgive."

As they did that, each in their own time allowed Christ to replace that which was no longer useful with the raw power of his forgiveness. A forgiveness that offered a blank canvas for the people of Coventry to rebuild their city and themselves – with a tested and proven faith, stronger, more resilient than ever before.

Today we are in different times, we don't have destruction raining down out of the skies, but we do have the devastations of our own era. We, ourselves, have lost loved ones, lost employment, lost relationships. Nor have our friends escaped these pains. Perhaps these are the nails of our time – those events that shred and pierce the fabric of our lives. What are we to do? Today offers us the same path as the citizens of Coventry. To take those hurtful elements that no longer serve us – bind them onto the Cross of Christ and ask for the strength to release them and be reconciled.

(continued on the next page)

Forgiveness Makes You Free

It is not "forgive and forget" as if nothing had ever happened; it's "forgive and go forward" building on mistakes of the past, and the energy generated by reconciliation creates a new future.

Alan Paton

"Forgiveness makes you free," Father Ubald Rugirangoga, a Catholic priest from Rwanda, told his TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) Talk audience in 2013. The 65-year-old priest recently died of complications of COVID. He had travelled the world spreading a message of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. His knowledge of the power of reconciliation was rooted in personal loss. In 1994, his mother was among 80 family members murdered during a genocide that ended the lives of at least 800,000 people, mostly ethnic Tutsi, in 100 days.

An obituary in the Milwaukee Journal reported that Fr. Rugirangoga not only forgave the man who killed his mother, but paid to send the man's son to school, while the murderer served a prison term for his crimes. This priest's story puts my own experiences of reconciliation in a whole new light. How petty of me – or any of us – to harbor a grudge or even feel put upon by even a relatively minor slight. Thinking back on such occasions, it's true when

I have embraced or made peace with a friend, a sibling, or a situation to reconcile – to forget and forgive and move on has always felt freeing.

I write this in light of a horror that occurred right here in our own country on January 6. An angry mob of supporters of the outgoing president stormed the U.S. Capitol. In the wake of that mayhem and destruction, five died, a Capitol Hill police officer committed suicide within days, and at least one other is recovering from injuries inflicted by protestors who dragged, kicked and beat him with a pole to which a U.S. flag was affixed. Before he sent the mob off from the rally, the then-president told them to "never forget" that the election in Georgia was stolen – a totally untrue statement. For the good of our country, we must pray that the truth of Fr. Rugirangoga's message somehow touches the hearts of ALL Americans. It is the only way forward.

Linda Duczman O'Connell

(continued—Choosing Reconciliation)

I am not sure we can know the breadth of our own sin unless we stop for a moment and take stock of our actions. I am not sure we can accept the forgiveness of Christ unless we recognize the depth of Christ's gift of forgiving us if we cannot forgive as he forgives. Who we are as a Christian people invites us to release all that brings us

down – to find ways to lift up others even as we all are in the midst of our own struggle and loss. Let us remind ourselves that *only* in forgiving and in reconciliation can Christ's light truly shine in each of us. And it is the light of Christ we need in this present hour.

Greg Pickens

Reflections of Faith - Issue 128 February 2021

Editorial Board: Helen Dahms, Bernadette Davel, Marianne Hondel, Linda Duczman O'Connell

Reflections of Faith is published five times each year for and by the parishioners of St. Catherine Parish. \$5 - suggested donation for non-parishioners

Becoming Reconciled to My Life

In the movie “Great Expectations” (I’ve never read the book), young people were chosen to be properly educated because someone saw in them a future with great expectations. They were motivated by hopes and dreams of an easy life. Although I always said I would not keep a job I didn’t like just for the money, I did have comfort and security as my constant hopes and dreams toward an easy life.

About two years ago I began Advent with the book *Preparing for Christmas: Daily Meditations for Advent*, by Richard Rohr. On the first day, he asked the question: “What expectations and demands of life can you let go of so that you can be more prepared for the coming of Jesus?” I decided to let go of an expectation of happiness. I know that sounds a little sad, but for me it was a release. I tried to be more mindful of what really mattered in life. I tried to recognize what was false happiness and what was true happiness. It’s an ongoing battle, because by nature I’m a dreamer; and through my dreams, I build my future. How

does anyone’s future look without an expectation of happiness? Hope becomes an illusion.

Since the new normal caused by the coronavirus and the readings and discussions about racism and living with privilege, I have become much more grateful for my life exactly as it is. I have come to love my home and my neighborhood that in the past I had thought were lacking. Giving up the great expectations has helped me reconcile with my lot in life – relationships, money, weight and natural talent (or lack of it). It makes me wonder if becoming reconciled is the same as giving up. Reconciling could be resignation or it could be acceptance. To me it feels like acceptance – of being humbled but not beaten – and gives me inner peace and, occasionally, joy.

Carole Poth



It's a tumultuous time in the world.

Tensions are running high because of unpredictability. Opinions and ideas are clashing, making it sometimes difficult to work in groups and affect decision making. Conflicting beliefs divide us and are even breaking up families. Fear around the pandemic is unsettling and the losses in our community impact us all, naturally resulting in some level of anxiety and grief. Paying attention to our inner thoughts can bring us self-awareness. Very often, the critical voice goads us, judges our imperfections, or compels us to ‘suck it up’ and to make self-sacrifices.

Our inner voice can even cause us to punish ourselves, and our self-worth is questioned. Responding to our negative inner voice is important. “That decision was stupid; I am not stupid.” or “I made a mess; I am not a mess.” This is an important distinction. Talking back to our negative voices can provide an opportunity

for us to be kinder to ourselves, thereby reconciling with ourselves.

The issue is that we all, especially as women, are raised to be kind and conciliatory. We are taught not to get or express anger. However, I believe that it is important to acknowledge that there is righteous anger. It’s what we do with this very natural human emotion that is important. So rather than reconciliation being something that makes one’s view compatible with another (a standard definition) we should consider how we can evolve our culture to accept having differences while still honoring and respecting each other’s humanity. By practicing this kind of honest reconciliation with compassion and empathy for ourselves, we will then be better equipped to do this with others.

Claudine Naganuma

I Hope I Will Have Wisdom

I'll never forget a conversation I had with a young man who was troubled by his lightning-quick anger. He said it was not enough to ask forgiveness. He had to come up with a different strategy for times when life didn't go his way. I thought that was a really wise insight for a 16-year old. As time went on, I noticed him working on, and sometimes succeeding with, different ways of responding.

Should not social sin be approached the same way?

I am troubled by my numbness in the face of social sin. For example, I have become aware of systemic racism, not just personal racism, and I'm trying to figure out how to change a system, or change my place in the system. Confessing the sin and receiving absolution is not complete unless I make up for the offense and find ways, strategies to avoid the sin in the future. The trouble with social sin is that it is embedded deep within our culture. It is a hidden part of our everyday existence, like the air we breathe. I struggle to find ways to deal with it.

I am numb because I have steeled my heart against the guilt of being part of an obviously unjust system that I don't know how to fix. A more appropriate response, in which I occasionally engage, is to mourn the injustices. Yet, that falls short of making up for the offense(s) and finding ways to avoid them in the future.

My thought is that, just as social sin is invented and cemented into a system by organized groups who benefit from it socially and economically, so it must be opposed. Social sin can be countered by people organized to pray and work together against the unjust systems, as a practice of their faith. Or as a practice of their humanity if they are not people of faith. The difference between the investors in social sin and the opposers of social sin is the probability that the opposers may reap only spiritual, not material, benefit from purging systems of injustices. Sounds like Jesus' way, doesn't it?

God sometimes raises up leaders with great wisdom who guide the struggle against social sin. John Lewis, for example, not only crusaded his whole adult life against racial injustice — but did it as an act of love. He carried with him a sense of love and understanding for those who did not want changes in systems that were comfortable for them. And yet he pushed. He could not say, "Let someone else take care of it; I don't want to get involved." I hope I will have the wisdom to join with others persistently, to keep nudging for changes to sinful systems within our society.

Mary Krolikowski

*Even though people about us choose the path of hate and violence
and warfare and greed and prejudice,
we who are Christ's body must throw off these poisons
and let love permeate and cleanse every tissue and cell.
Nor are we to allow ourselves to become easily discouraged
when love is not always obviously successful or pleasant.*

Clarence Jordan, "The Substance of Faith"

Reconciliation - The Instrument of Peace

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.” This Prayer of St. Francis is my favorite prayer which I say daily. As a young man after the 1960’s marches, we gathered at St. Francis Church in the inner city, and I joined the Third Order of St. Francis, a lay order and recruited my mom to join also. Open Housing Legislation became law.

Do we have hatred in our society today? Recent events have reached a level of hysteria in the grab for power and control, forgetting that only God is omnipotent and in control. National media have abandoned objectivity and even resorted to censorship at times. Self-interest and how our bread is buttered have taken prime import with rationalization of human life as well. The Pandemic and its effects on the economy and racial tensions regarding equality and policing now deeply divides our country.

Perhaps we need to look at the author of the prayer above, St. Francis. He was born in Assisi in 1182, the son of a wealthy cloth merchant. Like St. Augustine and

Thomas Merton, he enjoyed his partying youth until he was taken prisoner in a local war which left him weak and ill and changed his life. He swapped clothes with a leper he met. In an old church, he heard Jesus from the Cross tell him to “rebuild my Church.”

Visiting the poor in hospitals, he gave his father’s money and clothing to them. His enraged father brought public charges against him to repay the stolen money and clothes. He striped naked and repaid his father; his reconciliation was with his father and with God, “my Father in Heaven.”

Through preaching and good works, he attracted followers. Pope Innocent III constituted his Order. An order of nuns was also formed by his co-worker, St. Clare, to work with the poor.

At this time of deep division, we must, like St. Francis, repent our sins and PRAY with FAITH acknowledging that God is in control, and with His grace and the Holy Spirit we can be reconciled to God and to one another by striving to become, like Francis and Clare, Instruments of Peace and Justice.

Peace, Ernest Andrew Herre



*The first to apologize is the bravest.
The first to forgive is the strongest.
The first to reconcile is the happiest.*

Author Unknown

Is The Need for Reconciliation Rooted in Creation Stories?

Recently I picked up the book, *Damaged Heritage* by J. Chester Johnson. It tells about an excruciating massacre that is little known in the history of our country. It made me start thinking more seriously about reconciliation and our past.

The story is the Elaine Race Massacre of 1919 at the Hoop Spur Church in the vicinity of Elaine in rural Phillips County, Arkansas. How many African Americans perished was never accurately documented. It all came about because white landowners were concerned that the black vets who returned from World War I would lead a rebellion and unionize farm workers in the area. Even more worrisome for the white landowners, the vets were trained in the use of “modern armament.”

The massacre started at a church meeting where the attendees were suspected of union organizing. A posse surrounded the church and started firing; those who escaped were to be hunted down, and any other sympathizers were to be killed. The governor contacted the Department of War and asked for United States soldiers to put down the “alleged revolution.” The Secretary of War directed more than 500 soldiers to proceed to Elaine. From the best reports at the time, about 100 men perished. Others were detained; twelve sharecroppers were charged with capital murder and sentenced to death.

On February 19, 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a 6–2 decision in favor of the defendants, maintaining the Moore Twelve, as

they were known, had been denied “due process” noting the judicial proceedings had been influenced by a mob that had assembled outside of the courthouse before the men were sentenced. Ultimately, Governor McRae commuted the death sentences of the sharecroppers to twelve-year terms in prison, making them immediately eligible for parole. On January 13, 1925, the six Moore defendants were granted indefinite furloughs and released.

Only where each person confronts his/her sin can reconciliation happen.

In writing the book, Mr. Johnson set out to establish a memorial in Arkansas commemorating the massacre. There was all kinds of push back. As he concluded his journey into the story, the author delved into the need for reconciliation to address the stain on the State of Arkansas. Johnson quotes Professor James H. Cone’s book, *Black Theology and Black Power*: “If an act of reconciliation reaches success, it does so by forming a one-on-one understanding and does not presume to be accessible through an abetting institutional structure. Many may even consider one-on-one reconciliation too optimistic; still, I encourage each person to take the step toward this prospect; the result can be extraordinary.”

This made me think about what it is that moves us to persecute others and even kill them when we perceive that they are not like us. I then started thinking about the

Origin Stories in the Bible, explicitly Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve. Abel, a herd keeper, and his brother Cain, a farmer, brought their offerings to be presented to God. Abel’s offering was found to be worthy while Cain’s was not; Cain, in an act of aggression, killed his brother. Many scriptures stories reveal a sense of enmity between farmers and keepers of flocks. Down through history, we recall enmity between Hebrews and Egyptians, Christians and Romans, Muslims and early Christians, even to our country between the indigenous population and European immigrants, etc. Racism, hatred and death down through the ages!

The need for reconciliation is almost too much to comprehend. Many of us have been in discussions about racism and the need to understand others and appreciate their life’s journey, but the bedrock of the matter is the need to be reconciled for our communal and individual offenses. Johnson ran into groups of Arkansans who did not see a need to be reconciled for the crimes of their forefathers and refused to erect a memorial that acknowledged the bloody massacre.

It’s evident from the beginning of the Bible that there is a constant need for reconciliation. Only in a setting where each person confronts his/her sin can this happen. I believe that it is in prayer and an acknowledgement of our past sinfulness that we need as we approach the table of the Lord each week.

Steve O’Connell

Reflections of Faith

St. Catherine Parish
5101 W. Center Street
Milwaukee, WI 53210

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG'N
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
MILWAUKEE, WI
PERMIT NO. 5541

Next Issue: Formed/Reform

Formed: What experiences/people have helped *form* you

... in childhood? ... as a teen? ... as an adult? ... as a senior?

How can we seek out formative experiences?

Reform: What do you want to *reform*?

... in your life? ... in our society? ... in our country?

How can you be part of the reformation?



Deadline: March 15, 2021