

## **Peacework: Community and Conclusion p.98 – end**

### **Overview of Chapter**

#### **Community**

‘Prayer and resistance can be expressions of Christian peacemaking only when they are embedded in community’ p.98. Argues that without grounding in community, both can ‘degenerate into forms of individual heroism’ (p.98), through sharing in ‘the arrogance of those who believe peace can be achieved by fighting’ (p.98).

Important as these communities that give witness and make visible God’s peace in the world. In this way, these communities form the ‘first realization of the “new heavens and the new earth”’ = not just ‘a means to accomplish peace’ but also ‘the place where the peace we are seeking receives its first form’ (p.99).

#### **Body of Christ**

See that Nouwen thinking about distinctly Christian peacemaking as well as Christian communities. Speaks about how reflect how Jesus’ brings peace into broken world. Argues that can’t do this alone, as would perpetuate isolation.

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to draw us together ‘in one body’ and unites us ‘by the same promise... set free for the same work of peace’ (p.101). Explains that this ‘new body is Christ’s own’. This ‘great mystery of the Christian community’ is that it is the ‘living’ body of Christ, continuing to bring peace of Christ to the world.

Means that rather than identifying peacemaking communities with institutions, people, organizations etc., although these may be a part of it, centre of these communities is spiritual. Able to ‘resist the powers of death and evil because it is the living Christ himself present in the world.... a sign of hope precisely since it represents the light that cannot be extinguished and the light that cannot be killed’ (p.107-8).

#### **Confession and Forgiveness**

Communities of peacemaking therefore marked by example of Christ, particularly confession and forgiveness which ‘stand in the center of the mission of Jesus’ (p.103). ‘Spiritual pillars’ of peacemaking, which are key to process of reconciliation (p.105).

Significance of this, is that overcomes what divides us – ‘dividing lines’ to not have to ‘stand in the way of lasting fellowship’ (p.105). Through continuous processes of ‘mutual confession and forgiveness’ (p.104), sees division as possible to overcome, and through this revealing ‘God’s unlimited forgiveness... to the world’ (p.105). = ‘God-given way to break through the many boundaries of fear that keep us separated from each other’ (p.105).

### **Hope and Courage**

Argues that community takes away isolation but also offers ‘new courage and new confidence’ (p.106). Christ leaves us with ‘the gift of hope’ (p.107). Differs to optimism but is rather based on faith; ‘on the promise of God’s forgiveness to all people’ (p.107). Sees this as becoming visible when made manifest in communities that believe in this promise and work together for the Kingdom.

Means that Christian communities not coming together to ‘unify their forces’ for ‘victory’ in pursuit of peace, as already an ‘expression of a victory already won’ with ‘hope rooted in what has already occurred’ (p.108). Community of resistance by sharing the light of this truth with the world.

### **Gratitude and Praise**

Sees resistance and prayer as both only fully understood within context of community. Sees resistance as rooted in the reality of the resurrection as ‘celebrated’ within the life of the Christian community; prayer a thanksgiving for this reality we have received. Community = rooted in ‘unceasing gratitude to the Lord’ (p.114) and ‘thanksgiving for what already has been given us’ (p.114).

Because know world ‘already been overcome’ able to remain grateful even in face of suffering (p.115). ‘If there is any word that should characterize the life of peacemakers, it is “gratitude”, for “True peacemakers are ... persons who constantly recognize and celebrate the peace of God within and among them’ (p.115). Means that even when suffer cannot be robbed of our peace, for it is in our suffering that we ‘meet the suffering Christ’ and where we ‘also meet the Christ of peace’ (p.115). Christ too suffers with us and overcomes this suffering on the cross. Knowing this, therefore, ‘our gratitude can be even deeper and stronger’ (p.115).

Argues that when try to overcome violence alone, feel powerless which leads to anger and resentment. ‘Resentment is the opposite of gratitude’ as ‘It is the mood of the hardened heart that... has accepted death as a fatality that cannot be escaped’ (p.116) = ‘a sign of our having become victims of the darkness... and of

having lost faith...' (p.116). Gratitude, on the other hand, is expression of knowing we do not have 'to deal with the world on our own' (p.116).

Community of peacemaking = 'a Eucharistic community' (p.118) – the 'event in which all peacemaking is summarized' (p.118). In Eucharistic, see boundless generosity of God. Helps us to see how everything is 'pure unconditional gift' – all the world 'manifestations of that inexhaustible divine generosity' (p.119). By seeing life in this way, see that all is to be shared, all gift from God, all loved by God, each other and the world – don't need to fight or defend but rather celebrate and enjoy.

### **Breakout Room Questions**

- Do you agree with Nouwen that community is essential for peacemaking? Why?
- What do you see as significant about the way he characterizes peacemaking communities?
- How do we account for peace makers who are not part of Christian communities?

### **Conclusion**

### **Breakout Room Questions**

- What were your initial impressions of the text? Has this impression changed as we've read through the text? If so, how?
- What does Nouwen teach us about peacemaking? Has this changed any of your ideas about peacemaking?
- How do you see peace, resistance and community as working together?
- What do you think is the most valuable message in Nouwen's work? How might you implement this in your life?
- Is Nouwen's message still applicable in our current context, 40 years after the text was written? What might new challenges be?
- What questions would you want to ask Nouwen? Is there anything that has remained unanswered?

### **Key Quotes:**

p.120 '... what makes us peacemakers is not threats or fears but the vision of the new and holy city coming down from heaven, the city of peace...'

p.123 'In our nuclear predicament, prayer comes to mean ultimate survival, resistance comes to mean a radical "No" to a world engulfing death, and

community comes to mean the beginning of a spiritual home that no cruise missile or Trident submarine can destroy’.

p.124 ‘... this total belong to Christ is not an escape from the world, but the only way to be in the world as peacemakers’.

p.124 ‘Those who do not belong to this world are the only ones who can bring it the peace it craves’.

p.125 ‘The first and final criterion is whether we belong to God or to the world...’

p.126 ‘Holiness, that is, life with the Holy One, is the fruit of all peacemaking’.

p.127 ‘Be reconcile to God” – that means “Be at peace”. This reconciliation and peace is God’s gift to us in Jesus Christ, and no human being can destroy it. No country, no army, no president can deprive us of this divine peace’.