

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

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I. Introduction

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the organizers of this wonderful gathering and indeed for the privilege of being invited to speak to you. The topic given to me is <Peace and Reconciliation>. Given the fact that it is not only a vast subject but also a subject addressed by people from all walks of life, the following will be my approach : with the risk of sounding simplistic, I will be less theoretical and be more practical with specific examples. My intervention will tackle the subject from three angles : peace and reconciliation in Rwanda (my country), peace and reconciliation as perceived by the church and para-church organizations both nationally and internationally, cross cutting issues in or challenges facing Peace and Reconciliation. Simply put, reconciliation simply could be defined as a method of bringing together once again people, families or communities who were split apart by various things such as disputes, wars etc... so as to rebuild the broken relationship between those people, families or communities again. When it is done effectively, the lost peace and trust is quickly reestablished .

Generally speaking, the process of reconciliation has many components such as truth telling, repentance , forgiveness and reparation where possible. For effective reconciliation to take place, there are four important steps to take place, namely reconciliation with God, with one's conscience, with one's neighbour and finally with one's environment. Not every one will agree with this order which in my humble opinion is very crucial, I will come back to this.

II.A. Rwanda

If you do not know where Rwanda is, do not blame yourself, it is a small African country (only 26.000 km²) sandwiched between Congo (West), Burundi (South) Tanzania (East) and Uganda (North-East). The country has a population of around eight million people. It

is a very poor country but on the other hand it is a very beautiful country with a lot of potential given its people and their culture and its geographical location. It is a country with a very unfortunate history whereby years of political manipulation culminated in a tragedy so destructive in a manner that transcends human understanding namely the 1994 genocide in which one million innocent people were killed in just one hundred days. One would wonder if Rwandese are not terrible or rather horrible human beings. No far from that, I take the risk of saying that put under the same conditions, probably any people would have done the same. I know some may feel embarrassed but allow me to explain what I mean which may explain the necessity and urgency of peace and reconciliation not only in Rwanda but also in the whole world.

Before the coming to Rwanda of the Europeans, genocide was simply not possible because of the checks and balances within the social fabric of the Rwandese society. As a matter of fact, when the Europeans arrived in Rwanda in the beginning of the 20th century, Rwandese had lived together for several centuries but had never fought along ethnic lines. There were fighting here and there because of various reasons but tribalism or ethnicity was never an issue in Rwanda until it was made one at a later stage. Today Rwandese speak the same language, look alike in many ways, have the same culture and live together in towns and villages. And this is how it has been for as long as history can tell; indeed for several centuries. When the Belgians came, they defined the Rwandese as a people with three distinct ethnic groups with clear description of each ethnic group. To make sure that this was properly done, identity cards were introduced in 1930's with ethnic mention.

Because people were moving from one group to the other because of marriage or social status, it was hard to know who was who. At that time cows were a sign of wealth and the Belgians came up with the following equation : those who had more than ten cows were called Tutsi said to be 9 %, those who had less or no cows at all mainly doing agriculture were called Hutu said to be 90 % and the down trodden who were hunting only were called the Batwa said to be 1 %. People did not stop from changing social status or intermarrying but it was no longer possible to move from one ethnic group to the next. It was always determined by what was written in the identity card of the father. What was a

socio-economic stratification became an ethnic divide and that was fixed once and for all.

During the genocide, away from the neighbours who knew them, adults were asked to display their identity cards in order to know who to kill and not to kill and whoever did not show it would be killed on the spot. This explains why there were the so called Hutu who were mistakenly killed by the militia on one hand and many so called Tutsi children who survived when they were separated with their parents because they did not have identity cards.

Probably way in the past they were three distinct ethnic groups but over the years they had merged into social stratifications. Unfortunately the Belgians introduced this ethnic divide and over the years they would play one group against the other depending on what they wanted at that particular time.

The Rwandese who took over from them continued with this policy of ethnic manipulation and indeed things moved from bad to worse. Needless to say that it was bad leadership and mal administration which has caused so much conflicts and political turmoil resulting into untold suffering.

After years of institutionalized discrimination and waves of terrible killings, the country was left completely devastated not only economically but also socially and morally. On one hand there were one million people dead and most of these were not even buried, on the other hand there were millions of returnees, refugees, orphans and widows, killers and victims all of whom were traumatized in one way or another. Be it among the millions of refugees who were planning to come back fighting or those inside the country ready to fight to the last drop of their blood, there was a lot of fear, hatred and suspicions .

Shortly after the genocide, it was clear everything was needed but more than anything else there was great need for peace and reconciliation. It is against this background that the new political leaders who preferred to be known as <the Government of National Unity> put peace and reconciliation top on their agenda. Those who have been in the cold enjoy the sunshine most.

Before going into what has been done in relation to peace and reconciliation, allow me to first of all explain the Rwandese understanding of it. Depending on who you are asking especially on reconciliation which ultimately bring peace, the younger generation clearly will define reconciliation as <living together and moving together forward>.

For the older generation, reconciliation means truth telling and truth seeking, respect for the survivors of the genocide, forgiveness, remembrance etc... This definition of reconciliation seems confusing but it will become clearer as I will go through some of these ideas. In any case, this is the reality of what we are going through as a people.

In order to achieve reconciliation, the newly formed government had to make a number of steps :

1. The first step was the political will which was made explicit in various declarations. It was made clear that Rwandese had to live together and indeed the government was willing to do everything possible for peace and reconciliation.
2. The second step was to make it clear that non one was allowed to revenge; that the rule of law was to be established over against lawlessness and anarchy the country had gone through. This was very crucial since some of the soldiers had lost members of their families and they knew who had killed them. If strong measures were not taken, the country was risking to fall in a vicious circle of bloodshed. I remember one soldier telling me how he looked at those who had killed his relatives and as he knew that if he had killed them(because he had his gun) he would have been severely punished, he simply shed tears. There may have been a few problems here and there but generally speaking a lot of efforts were made to stop people from taking revenge.
3. The third step was to deal with the problem of refugees. Close to half the Population were in exile in neighbouring countries and among these

refugees were armed defeated soldiers who continued not only the training but also the recruitments. Leaders at all levels went to various refugee camps encouraging them to return home and those who returned were given back their properties and in most cases their jobs. Even a good number of soldiers who did not want to be demobilized were reintegrated in the army to be with those who defeated them. As a result very many refugees returned home. In fact something special was made where refugees were sending delegations to come from the refugee camps to the country with the agreement of UNHCR that they would be allowed to go round the country, visit their relatives, homes and properties and then they would make a choice after to either remain in exile or return home. They would be under the government protection while in the country until they would be handed back to UNHCR. This encouraged very many refugees to return home. This was rather strange because normally by definition a refugee is a *persona none grata* in his own country.

4. Last but not least was the establishment of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) specifically to take a lead in mobilizing and training communities on unity and reconciliation. In order to carry out the mission, the commission is using mainly four tools, namely Ingando, or solidarity camps reconciliation summits, leadership academy, inter community exchanges and consultations. The first one Ingando which is very popular now is drawn from the Rwandese culture and it is a way of getting people together for a given period of time (normally a couple of weeks); they eat together, play together and discuss certain issues together in a bid to come up with a common understanding.

The first beneficiaries of this programme were ex-combatants returning from neighbouring countries. The programme was later on expanded to include various youths especially those going to universities. Now the programme has been extended to informal traders, and other social groups

including survivors of the genocide, prisoners, community leaders, women etc..

Today Ingando are carried out countrywide in a bid to have a common understanding of various topics under five central themes : analysis of Rwanda's problems, history of Rwanda, political and socioeconomic issues in Rwanda and Africa, rights, obligations and duties and leadership. In addition to this there are unity and reconciliation clubs being established as well as community mobilizers, all in order to establish lasting peace in and among the communities.

III. The Church and Reconciliation

A. The church of Jesus Christ both taken collectively as the universal body of Christ and individually as the local church or even individual Christians have and are still playing a vital role in the process of reconciliation.

To carry out the ministry of peace and reconciliation is a biblical imperative and this has been clearly stated by Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians :
<From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view, even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know Him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new !!! All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <II Corinthians 5 : 16-19>

From the biblical perspective, the work of genuine reconciliation starts with God who made the first step in Jesus Christ, it is done with God in the power of the Holy Spirit and it is sustained in the awaiting of the Parousia even the coming of our Lord Jesus and the establishment of <New heaven and New Earth> It is in this respect that various churches and Para-church organizations have played an active role in what has been going on in my country in the way of reconciliation. Church leaders have participated in various meetings and consultations and indeed we have been requested to speak to various

categories of people such as prisoners, survivors of genocide and those in solidarity camps. Churches, para-churches themselves have organized meetings seminars, consultations and crusades. Some of the above mentioned activities are carried out jointly while others are implemented by individual churches.

B. Individual Church

My Diocese (EER Gahini Diocese) which covers an area inhabited by five hundred thousand people of which sixty thousand would be active members of our church is very active in reconciliation.

In December 1999 we had a youth convention which attracted one thousand three hundred young people from all over the diocese and at the end of four days of deliberations and discussions, five resolutions were made : first of all they would play a role in evangelization which was identified as a key to the success of other programmes, secondly they would be involved in the promotion of peace and reconciliation, thirdly they would fight HIV and Aids, fourth they would fight ignorance and lastly they would work hard for food security in their respective families and in the whole region.

These resolutions were later on adapted by the diocesan synod, thus becoming the general policy of the whole diocese. Following those resolutions a number of activities have been carried out. There has been music, drama and dance competitions at various levels with peace and reconciliation as the theme. In composing various songs, young people not only own the reconciliation agenda but also they spread the message of peace far and wide. The response has been wonderful indeed but unfortunately, we are unable to do the follow up. Along the way the momentum could be lost because of lack of guidance and coordination. We need a strong follow up programme but unfortunately we can no afford it. All that is needed is some support and the rest will be done by the people themselves. If today we are living together in peace and harmony, it is not without deliberate efforts and sacrifice and as we are determined to remain at the forefront as peacemakers, we kindly request your prayers and your support to keep moving forward.

C. Christian Organizations (or NGO's)

The Christian organizations have done a lot in the area of peace and reconciliation and just allow me to give you just an example of one I know best. The name of the organization is MOUCECORE, meaning in French : Mouvement Chrétien pour l'Évangélisation, le Counselling et la Reconciliation (Christian movement for evangelization, counseling and reconciliation) which started shortly before the genocide in 1992 by Bishop Alexis Bilindabagabo and his wife Dr Grace. At that time, people in politics and in the church were fighting for leadership positions and this was taking place everywhere but at the same time there was fighting between the then Rwandese government (which was in secret organizing the genocide) and the Rwandese Patriotic Front which eventually won and stopped the genocide. I had just become a diocesan bishop and all of a sudden the Lord challenged me and said to me <Alexis what my people need is not Lords but servants, give up your position as a diocesan bishop and start the ministry of healing and reconciliation among my people and if you don't, you will be killed very soon. I immediately obeyed, gave up the position, started the ministry but I was not sure where this was taking me. One year after we had organized two seminars on peace building, there was genocide. I was on the hit list, how I survived is a long story but suffice to say that when I was expecting to be in heaven I found myself in Congo alive just like a person waking up in the middle of a nightmare. The story is in my book <Rescued by Angels>

I had to wrestle with God for two weeks in order to know why I was alive and what I had to do next. Surprisingly God gave me a new commitment; that I had to care for the orphans. I immediately started my new mission (I will tell you more about this) but the question was what to do with reconciliation which was more needed than ever before. As I was struggling with the two burdens on my already tired shoulders, there came Michael Kayitaba who is the actual director of MOUCECORE and he had all the qualifications I needed for the ministry to move forward. He was a born again Christian, a wise person, academically qualified, and above anything else on fire for the reconciliation of our people. The big problem was that we did not have money and he had a wife and five children to feed. A lot of NGO's were coming to the country with big money and that

was a big temptation. After a long discussion, we agreed to trust God and take up the challenge. When we obey, God is always faithful; twelve years have passed and Michael is still with the ministry.

Having said that let me tell you what we do in simple terms because even our approach is very simple. Realizing that we can not go or be everywhere, we had to rely on trustworthy people we knew across the country whom we would invite and train for a couple of days or weeks and in return they would go back and train others. Out of those trainings would come specific actions of peace building which actions we would be supporting. Our starting point would be to know if they are really committed Christians .

This is because we believe that true, genuine and lasting and if you like everlasting reconciliation can only take place at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ.

The next step would be to ask them if they really want to live out what they believe. The third step would be to challenge them with specific examples but we never told them what to do. We would ask them <how do you really tell to a hungry person that you care apart from feeding him or her ?>. There is no way of showing to orphans that you love them apart from meeting their various needs especially when you know that their parents have been killed by your own relatives. The only way of showing to widows that you are a new creation is by providing to her much needed shelter and to cultivate her garden because you know what happened to her husband and children. It becomes clear that in order to do these things you can not be on your own, you need other people. This is how various groups were formed and started so many wonderful initiatives of caring for the orphans, the widows and the hungry. Our main task has been to accompany them by training them and visiting them as well as providing things they do not have such as iron sheets for houses, manure etc.. As you can imagine, the response is extremely interesting because each work done, they make sure they complete it. I want to draw your attention on two points and I am done.

First of all it is their programme and not Moucecore's programme or Bishop's programme... When you talk to them, they will tell you what they are doing with their

neighbours and what they are doing to deal with their problems. They totally own it for good or for bad and if they mess up, they will only have themselves to blame. The local pastor or priest can only keep an eye on what is taking place but he has no right to get directly involved in the management of the group. It is their business with God

Secondly, words like reconciliation, love or care are rarely used or not used at all and yet this is what is taking place. There was a time when there were too many seminars on reconciliation in Rwanda and very often we would be invited. I sometimes would say that when they will be talking about reconciliation, we will be doing it. These groups are making tremendous impact in their environment and as a result, many more groups have been formed. What they need is enough support and indeed before long the impact would be felt far and wide.

D. Individuals in Peace and Reconciliation

Behind the government, the church and para-church organizations, stand individual people but it is worth while to clearly assess the role individual people can and indeed do play in peace and reconciliation. The President of Rwanda, Mr KAGAME who lost members of his family during the genocide, could easily say that all those who killed should be killed as well because that is what the law he found in Rwanda stated. But just imagine for a moment that after losing a million people there was going to be another million plus who were going to be killed !!! That is what it meant if the law was to be followed blindly.

Mr KAGAME and his team (of politicians) did realize that even though these people had killed, there must be another way out other than endless killings.

I think credit should go to them. Somebody had to break that vicious circle of bloodshed. As it takes one or just a few people to plunge a country or countries in chaos, likewise it could take only a few people to restore peace and stability as necessary ingredients of economic development. There are some brave people who immediately after the genocide, went back to their villages or towns to take a message of peace and reconciliation to the very people who killed their relatives and were hunting for them.

After the genocide Rwandese had a choice to make between staying in the dust of self destruction in which we had fallen or to raise over and above the clouds of problems into the sunshine of peace and reconciliation. I had to make a choice myself and the choice was not an easy one. In fact the first option offered to me was a bursary to go away and forget about it all. After much prayer, I did see that it would have been a big mistake to be protected in order for me to just go away and forget about it all.

The other option was to let life go on as if nothing had happened but again terrible things had happened as most of my family members had been killed by people I knew... In that case then why not go and revenge but that was not the will of God. At the end I discovered that the will of God was for me to take care of the orphans and that is the way I followed with all my strength. It was a choice and a good one because these orphans needed the church to go to them now that they were unable to go to the church. They needed to see men in different colours now that they could not trust any man because of what they had seen men doing. They needed to see Christ not in white robes and golden crosses but in servants clothes and in my humble opinion this is peace building, it is reconciliation per excellence.

By the way, in the first place why are these conflicts and fighting ? This because of troubled individuals especially when they are in decision making positions. Late Bishop Festo Kivengeli said that people sometimes are like <Walking wars and when two wars meet then there is inevitably fighting> Is this not what St Augustine implied when he said that <Man's heart is restless until he finds rest in God> People think wrongly that peace simple means the absence of war. Even in the midst of dangers, peace makers will continue their work because what they have does not depend on the outside prevailing circumstances but on God who is the ultimate giver of peace. In my book <Rescued by Angels> which is an account of miracles God performed to protect me and my family during the genocide, in chapter four I talk about the greatest miracle which is to have <the peace of God which passes all understanding> in your heart even when you know that you are waiting to be killed any time. The blessed ones will continue the job of peace building no matter what is happening and the prevailing circumstances.

IV. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES ON PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

A. JUSTICE

Until justice is done and indeed seen to be done then you can never talk about reconciliation, leave alone lasting peace. The situation in Rwanda is very peculiar because the atrocities took place in day time with people killing their neighbours and in some cases their own relatives. Remember those who were on the hit list were all the so called <Tutsi> irrespective of their age, gender, religious or political affiliation together with all the prominent political opposers

Thus people found themselves either killing or witnessing the killings of their own in laws, nephews, cousins etc... People had some ideas or knew clearly who had killed who and how. Women were gang raped and often purposely by people who had HIV & Aids and left half dead in order for them to die a slow but sure death. Some were still alive and knew who had done that.

In those circumstances, there was no other way of preventing revenge apart from making it clear that no one was allowed to take the law in his or her own hand and promise that justice was going to be done. But how was this going to happen since the country was left with numerous problems that were varied and various. Among them we would mention the justice system which left a lot to be desired. In fact one can dare to say that the whole system was completely destroyed. The number of prosecutors, investigators and judges was very small indeed.

This was due to the fact that some had taken refuge outside the country and others had died during the genocide. Coupled with this was a weak justice system at competence level due to lack of necessary logistics, lack of qualifications and corruption which had become endemic.

What is even more, is that all the problems left by the genocide required urgent attention. More than 135.000 persons had been imprisoned as genocide and crimes against humanity suspects. More others were looming large outside prisons and needed to be

prosecuted as well. If all were to be prosecuted in the ordinary courts, the process was going to take no less than two hundred years and it is well known that <justice delayed is justice denied>. Besides, the delay had the potential of increasing mutual suspicion among people. A solution had to be found and most urgently.

There was need for a kind of justice that could uproot the culture of impunity and socially rehabilitate Rwandese society. After much consultation with people at various levels, it was discovered that there existed in our culture a form of justice which was at the same time restorative and reconciliatory known as GACACA. What was needed was to adapt this system, have it improved on and incorporated in our legal system. An independent secretariat was put in place to coordinate the programme, of course after the parliament had passed the new law in relation with Gacaca. It is worth saying that from time immemorial, Rwandese has been fond of managing their own conflicts. Citizens participated in this process and this legacy followed as time went by until it was suppressed by the colonial powers. That method of conflict resolution is what was referred to as Gacaca where the people sat together deliberated over disputes and designed restorative punishments or reconciled the conflicting parties. It was like the court of first instance of the local area and was presided over by people of integrity who had the competence to settle any conflicts that came up in the society. The main objective of Gacaca is now not so much to punish those found guilty but rather to eradicate the culture of impunity and to reintegrate in society those who willfully acknowledge their responsibility in the genocide and are willing to help to shed some light on what actually took place.

It is believed that Gacaca courts in Rwanda will lead to the truth being known which will help in reducing mutual suspicion and in that way a solid foundation for unity and reconciliation is laid. This is why the people themselves act as prosecutors and defendant witnesses of the two parties. Gacaca courts are based on codes like ordinary courts do base on written laws (codes) and that is why Gacaca law was enacted.

To enable the Gacaca courts to speed up trials as it is one of its objectives, the government categorized suspects so that all, apart from the worst offenders (actually the

planners and coordinators of the genocide), could be tried by and in their respective communities. Those in category number one have been said to be 2.133 so far and since they are likely to get the maximum penalty (life sentence) they are tried in the conventional courts.

The second category is made up of those who killed but following orders of their leaders and these are getting between ten and twenty five years imprisonment (but if they have been in prison, the years spent there are deducted) depending on how they are willing to help in telling the truth of actually what happened. Category number three are those who destroyed property or simply looted. They are asked to pay if they can but most of the time they cannot and they are asked to pay very little or they are simply forgiven.

The Gacaca process starts with the community collecting details of the population present in April 1994, those who were killed, what was looted, what infrastructure was destroyed and who was involved. Then when trials start, suspects are placed in different categories according to their level of involvement. Central to this process is the opportunity given to suspects to confess their crimes (details of what happened are required), to repent and to ask for forgiveness not only to the victims but also to the whole Community. There are reduced sentences for those who confess their crimes before the trial but also slightly less reduced sentences for those who confess during the trial. This is very important for the survivors of genocide because through those confessions they know where members of their families have been thrown in order for them to be given a descent burial.

Individual Christians and the church have helped a lot and at every step because we believe repentance and forgiveness stand at the heart of any attempt to restore the broken relationship. In fact when prisons were opened for the Gospel, it is at that very time when genuine repentance started pouring out of people's hearts. In that way even forgiveness was made easier for the victims. In fact one government official said this and I quote <If there is one thing we recognize the Christians are doing very well, it is that those who are genuinely repenting and forgiving are those who have been touched by the Gospel> Another time the then minister of justice told us about how he was touched by one prisoner who was always crying whenever he spoke of what he did. The minister told us

that he did some investigations on this man and found that he was a genuine born again Christian and given the chance to go out, he would be a wonderful citizen. Probably by now he is already out in the community helping in reconstruction and reconciliation. For other cases, other than genocide cases there has been the establishment of mediation committees in each sector. The mediation committee is known as <Abunzi >.

These are responsible for mediation between parties who have disputes involving matters determined by law, prior to filing them to the court of first instance. These are chosen for a period of two years among the people of integrity who are known to have mediating skills but who are not members of the decentralized local government or judicial organs.

B. POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Poverty alleviation is one of the most important pillars of peace and reconciliation. It is often said that a <hungry man is an angry man> Poverty may come as a result of natural disasters, wars, bad leadership or just bad politics and most of the time people are born into it or just find themselves into it. The terrible thing is that once you are there it becomes extremely difficult and almost impossible to shake yourself out of it; you need someone stronger to help you out. I think wealthy nations need to be told clearly that by empowering poor nations, they get a spin off of global peace and security. A flow of economic refugees migrating from poor countries into rich ones is a case in point. Billions of money is spend on <tightening security along the borders> but these people are fighting a losing battle because of several reasons. First of all these people have nothing to fear; not even death because even where they are, they are dying slowly but surely. They believe that they would rather die trying to run away from death (at least this is what they believe) Secondly, refugees are like running water and the more you stop it, the stronger and more threatening it becomes. The best you can do is to give it an orientation. The orientation in this case is to help in the development of poor nations which will create an incentive for each person to want to stay in his or her own country. In any case these people who are risking their lives to come to the West know that at times life can be rough there because of the weather and loneliness but on the other hand they hope that their basic needs could be met once they are there.

Allow me to mention in passing that the pace of information technologies and telecommunications are making national borders less relevant. Travel has become so easy and we can no longer avoid each other in our global village.

With globalization and the challenges it poses to all of us today, we as churches and para-church organizations need to reposition ourselves and indeed raise our voices in favor of the poor against a system which is making the rich even richer and the poor even poorer. Allow me to pose and commend the formation of Micah Network which was long overdue.

We need to get together more than ever before because in any case, <together we stand and divided we fall >. Our prophetic voice will be louder and our witness stronger.

It is true genocide in Rwanda was organized and coordinated by bad politicians but equally true is the fact that they took advantage of poor and ignorant people. Remember poor people were told that if and when they killed, they were entitled to the property of the victim. It is a lie to call a poor and ignorant person a free person. When you are poor, you have no right to decide; decisions are made by other people and you simply follow. The best way of setting free communities from the manipulation of greedy and unscrupulous politicians is not only to educate people but also to empower them economically.

There is great need for community based and community owned programmes aiming not only at reconciliation, but also at poverty eradication to be supported. I strongly believe and there is sufficient information (at least at my disposal) that given the correct amount of support, communities are ready to carry out integrated reconciliation and income generating activities. Once they are given space, people are ready and willing to embrace and shape their own concepts but my big question is whether or not that is the way decision makers want things to go. Example of success stories e.g. Kiramuzi, Rukomo.

V. Conclusion

A. If reconciliation is possible in Rwanda (and it is) then it should be possible everywhere else. I tell people that we have fallen so low that there is no lower than that except below the ground. The only option is to wake up and move forward. May I plead with you brothers and sisters to accompany us ? Of course for this to be possible, we need politically inclusive and conducive space for communities to develop and test ideas which may prove useful in finding solutions to their problems and good enough this is provided in Rwanda. But of course there is always room for improvement.

B. Any programme of reconciliation which does not take justice and restitution seriously carries within itself elements of self-destruction and indeed it is doomed to fail. Justice has to be done and it should be clear that no one is above the law. The hand of the law has to be seen and for the case of Rwanda especially in the eradication of the culture of impunity and the elimination of the genocide ideology. In this way suspicion is removed as well as the culture of generalization of criminality on family or some ethnic group as a whole. There is a culture of transparency in which free opinions can be expressed.

People feel that their rights are respected and this paves the way to genuine reconciliation and lasting peace.

C. Economic justice has to be part of the reconciliation agenda. Sometimes I find it hard to speak about reconciliation to orphans and widows who lost everything while I know so well that what they need is how to meet their basic needs of food, medical care and shelter. In any case they have done nothing for the injustice they have suffered and they are too weak to have any say on what is taking place. It is just too much for them and someone somewhere has to see this and that person has to be you and me.

D. In countries like Rwanda where most people are in a survival mode in which meeting basic needs such as food, water, shelter and medicines is a daily struggle, peace is very fragile and we have to handle it with care. We, evangelicals, many times promise to our

people <a pie in the sky when they die> but my question has always been if they can not have it here and now and there and then.

I live in the country side and of late I have been following (on TV) wonderful evangelical preachers in our city (Kigali) and what I hear them saying is this : <Jump high, feel good, and you are closer to heaven> Get me well I am not talking about being Spirit filled because I believe this is what we should be but I am talking about two crucial problems we are left with. The first problem is that no matter how we try jump high, we as a nation, do have real economic problems which need to be squarely faced and if not then they will pull us down. The second problem is that such programme leave us with huge problems to deal with : often you get a few smart but unscrupulous people trying to solve their financial problems with the little money meant for the programme and those honest people involved are left with a bad taste in their mouths often not wanting to get involved again. I have burned my fingers once or twice.

Together with the word of God and all the enthusiasm, we need bottom-up process and devises which build on the tradition and culture of the Rwandese people, which will address concurrently the spiritual, social and economic challenges of the day. This can only be done jointly with people who have not only the will but also proven records of honesty and hard work under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

Having said this, let me conclude by these few remarks :

- Reconciliation is possible since it starts and ends with God; all we need is to trust and obey.
- The good news is that reconciliation is taking place even in the most unlikely places like Rwanda
- The bad news is that people are failing even in the most unlikely places like families where love should be in plentiful
- The good news is that the world has enough for everyone to enjoy life
- The bad news is that there are a few people who have far more than they need while there are many people who have nothing at all.

- The good news is that there are people who are willing to do something and make a difference
- The bad news is that sometimes they do not know how to go about it

- The good news is that together we can fight and eradicate poverty
- The bad news is that we have not yet done it as yet

- The good news is that the world can be a better place to live in
- The bad news is that we do not believe it and as such, do not do as much as we could

Thank you and God bless you.