

Healing and reconciliation: a gift from God

Southern Sudan carries many wounds from the long years of war — wounds that are slow to heal. Yet those wounds need to find healing, not only for the sake of the past but also to be able to confront continuing difficulties in the present and face what may be a challenging future.

The Christian message of reconciliation begins with reminding ourselves that it is God who brings about healing and reconciliation in our lives, and that this healing and reconciliation has been entrusted to the Christian community as a special ministry.

St Paul puts it this way: 'So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old order has gone and a new being is there to see. It is all God's work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation.' (2 Cor 5:17-18).

What does this mean? When we look at the terrible things that have happened – the loss of life and loved ones, the cruelty done to people, the hatred and division – we do not know where to begin to heal such deep wounds. Our faith tells us that it is God who brings the healing, because only God can encompass the pain and suffering of so many people. God then works through us, as ministers of reconciliation, to make this healing possible.

So what is the ministry of reconciliation and how are we its ministers? It begins with our deep communion with this loving God, who helps us find the way through the sorrow and the loss. That spiritual bond helps us to see things as God sees them, and to take action that will bring about the healing God intends.

Through the years in Sudan we have learned much about healing painful memories, walking on the road to forgiveness, and sustaining hope along the way. These make up the ministry of reconciliation. These are things we can learn if we also learn how to dwell in God's grace and to see where God is working.

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