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Dear sisters and brothers

Jesus said that human beings cannot live by bread alone. Jesus did not
say that a human being can live without bread.

I am deeply honoured to have the opportunity to address you today.
Please may I add my own humble words of welcome to you to the
mother continent of the human family. Welcome home!

May I also take this opportunity to thank each of you for what you are
already doing to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.
Successive generations will honour you for your efforts.

Today, our focus will be upon conflict and conflict resolution. There is
no mention of conflict among the millennium development goals. I am
sure that you all agree with me, that conflict is a major factor preventing
development and slows us down - if not downright preventing us from
the achievement of the millennium development goals.

Perhaps we as the faith community need to add to the Millennium
Development goals another goal specifically around issues of healing
and reconciliation – not least because healing and reconciliation is part
of our core business. Ironically healing and reconciliation work is often
not even considered as one of the priorities for funding by Church
agencies.

In the debate yesterday I was struck by those who spoke of the need to
interrogate the MDGs from a Biblical
perspective and those who added “and theological”

This is an important point not to undermine the primacy of Scripture but rather to assert a high doctrine of the Holy Spirit who continues to lead us into all truth. After all Bible reading Christians took 1800 years to abolish slavery.

And when it comes to war and conflict we need not only look to Scripture but also to successive Lambeth conferences – to our social teaching. Resolution 5 of the Lambeth Conference of 1978 on War and Violence

said: Affirming again the statement of the Lambeth Conferences of 1930, 1948 and 1968 that “war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ “ the Conference expresses its deep grief at the great suffering endured in many parts of the world because of violence and oppression. We further declare that the use of the modern technology of war is the most striking example of corporate sin and the prostitution of God's gifts”

War and conflict, is part of the experience of many if not most of us. Consciously and unconsciously, we have been shaped by the conflicts of the past as well as present conflicts. Some would say that our own beloved Anglican Communion is now itself characterised by conflict.

How many of us come from countries which are either involved in war with another country or have fighting going on in some part of the country, or who are dealing with the aftermath of war? How many of us have relatives, parents and grandparents who were involved directly in war?

Every night on television, we see images from places of war. In the face of violence, which surrounds us, it is easy to feel helpless, hopeless and impotent. Sad to say, some of the most enduring conflicts hardly rate a mention in our media.

As Christians, do we have a role to play in preventing conflict? What is our role in healing wounds? Yesterday there was reference to how much is spent on armaments rather than development.. What is our prophetic role in relation to the armaments industry of our own countries? Some of us come from countries that are still refusing to sign the landmine treaty let alone supporting the abolition of cluster bombs. For most of humanity it is self evident that the greatest threat to world peace comes

from the one country in the world that has the greatest stockpile of nuclear weapons and is the only country that has ever used them.

Many of us were encouraged in the lead up to the Iraqi war, to witness, Archbishop Rowan Williams speaking out fearlessly against the decision of the Blair government to go to war. Unfortunately, despite some of the largest demonstrations in human history, the Bush-Blair-Howard axis took no notice.

Sad to say, for several centuries, South Africa was characterised by war, slavery, racism, dispossession, oppression injustice, violence, hatred exploitation and conflict. Finally, for us the sun dawned. 1994 was the turning point in our long journey as a nation, if not the beginning of our journey to become one nation.

As a nation two giant tasks faced us or to put it another way there were two very large questions, which confronted us. The first was how would we deal with the legacy of the past - the need to provide water and electricity, education and health care to all our people, the majority of whom had been denied basic rights for centuries. The second was how would we deal with the past? We might say that the first question deals with the millennium development goals or to put it another way, how do we provide bread for the people. That is the major concern of this conference, but for us as a nation we realised that we also had to confront the second question which relates to "not by bread alone"

We longed to turn the page of history. The problem was that the page was too heavy. It would not turn until we had read it

One of the ways we decided to confront our past was through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by our own beloved Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In this regard, we had also learnt from many countries in Latin America, especially Chile and Argentina. There are many legitimate criticisms that can be made of the truth commission process, particularly in regard to implementation by the government of generous and effective reparations. Nevertheless, the great contribution of the commission, was the opportunity it gave for many thousands of people to tell their stories and to have their pain acknowledged.

At the time of our transition to democracy, there were strong voices, especially from the white community, who asserted that the time had come to forgive and forget. Today on South African television, we

even have a program called "Forgive and forget."

Some years ago, I was leading a workshop on healing of memories. There were many clergy present. One of them said, the time has come to forgive and forget. I asked him, why do you say that? He said, because the Bible says so. I said, please show me the verse. He is still there at his home searching the pages of the Bible looking for the verse.

As I travel around the world, listening to the pain of the human family, people often say to me. I would love to forget what happened, but I cannot. Indeed this is true of both perpetrators and victims. Of course, sometimes, I can at the same time be both a perpetrator and the victim.

Can we forget what happened. As Christians are we supposed to forget. Christians, Moslems, and Jews, we, the children of Abraham belong to the three great remembering religions. In the Hebrew scriptures, whenever the Jewish people were misbehaving, the prophets would say: Remember when you were slaves in Egypt. Remember the God who walked with you, who talked with you.

The reason you are morally lost, the reason you cannot remember where you are going, is because you have forgotten where you are coming from.

In the New Testament Jesus says Take eat this is my body, this is my blood – do this in memory of me. .And so we have done so for more than two thousand years. Equally our Islamic sisters and brothers have their yearly round of commemorations.

We are committed to remembering not to forgetting. What kind of memory is it that the Bible wishes us to have. It is redemptive memory – the memory of good that comes out of evil – of life that comes out of death. From slavery to freedom in the promised land. And the Jesus story – the suffering, betrayal, crucifixion, death and resurrection to new life.

There is another kind of memory – destructive memory. Many conflicts are kept going from generation to generation by destructive memory. Grandparents teach their grandchildren to hate because of the poison which is connected to the memory.

What I am saying is true of individuals communities and of nations. In South Africa a conversation with an Afrikaaner often does not have to continue for very long before there is reference to the concentration camps invented by the British during the South African war of 1899 to 1902.

e.g. Mandela

The question is how do we move from destructive memory to redemptive or to life giving memory.

In my experience the key often lies in the role of acknowledgment – so often, in families, communities and nations there is knowledge but no acknowledgment. Once the wrong that has happened has been acknowledged the healing journey can begin. Archbishop Rowan in his Bible study emphasised the importance of knowing. I would like to emphasise in contradistinction the importance of acknowledgment

Acknowledgement is often the first step to healing. This is true individually as well as collectively.

In the last few days, one state legislature in the United States has finally acknowledged and regretted the pain which has been caused by the evil of slavery.

The issue of apology is on the agenda in many countries.

In the last week the temperature went up in Asia when the Japanese prime minister asserted that there would be no further apologies for the so called “comfort” women.

The Australian PM has refused to say, “I am sorry”

When horrible things happen to people often there are one of two journeys that people travel. One is when victims go on to become victimisers.

One of South Africa's great leaders, Chief Albert Lutuli once said, “Those who think of themselves as victims, eventually become the victimisers of others.” People give themselves permission to do terrible things to others, because of what was done to them. In conflicts, often both sides assert that they are the real victims.

Sometimes other people want to use the suffering of some as the pretext for violence which is exponentially greater.

In the US, when 911 happened the whole world embraced the people of the US. But then the option was taken for revenge.

There is a wonderful organisation in New York called 911 families for peaceful tomorrows- all of whom lost relatives on 911 and who are seeking to find life giving and peaceful responses to war and terror. They did not wish other mothers to cry because of what happened to their loved ones. Together with others of us directly affected by war and terror across the globe we have created a new international network It includes Britons like Jo Berry who have travelled a journey of reconciliation with Pat Magee who was responsible for the killing of her father in the Brighton bombing.

When something bad is done to us by others, we are victims. If we physically survive, we are survivors. Often people stop there and remain prisoners of moments in history. Many never make the next step: to move from being victims to survivors, to become victors – not in a militaristic sense – but in the Jesus sense – the victim of Good Friday who becomes the victor on Easter day

We all know in our own personal lives the power of acknowledgment – when the one who has hurt is able to say unequivocally: I am sorry, I was wrong. Will you forgive me?

Not easy to say in intimate space – not easy either for political or religious leaders – not easy to allow ourselves to be vulnerable or to take responsibility for the wrong that has been done. There are many parts of the world where apology remains a sharp issue both within countries and between countries – whether we are talking about slavery, between China and Japan, towards indigenous people in Australia to name but a few.

I have a dream that I will live to see the day when a British leader will say to the Irish people:we are sorry for our part in all the hurt that you have experienced.

I also have a dream that the day will come when the leaders of the worlds great religions will make an apology to same gender loving persons for so much pain for so long.

I hope I live long enough to hear the leaders of the US and the UK to say “I am sorry, we were wrong” to the Iraqi people.

I am sure that many of you have read Desmond Tutu's book, “No future without forgiveness”

The US theologian Donald Shriver has written about the role of forgiveness in settling disputes between nations.

But what of forgiveness? I'm sure not from this august body, but often from pulpits, preachers tell their congregations that they must forgive, and forgiveness is spoken of as something glib and cheap and easy. The preacher doesn't admit that she or he finds forgiveness costly, painful, and difficult. And that it is a journey and a choice.

Often what we say about forgiveness is a reflection of Bicycle Theology. Ref ASF. Bicycle Theology is where I come, I steal your bicycle, and six months later I return, and I say to you, "I am the one who stole your bicycle. I am very sorry. Please will you forgive me?" And because you're a good Christian person, you say, "Yes of course I forgive you" and I keep the bike. Often, we in the church preach Bicycle Theology. We reduce forgiveness to saying sorry, and we don't return the bike. Restitution and reparation are part of the journey of forgiveness.

I have often said that, in my own journey, I am not full of hatred, I'm not bitter, I don't want revenge. Because I realized that if I was filled with hatred and bitterness I would be a victim forever: they would have failed to kill the body, but they would have killed the soul. So sometimes after I speak, somebody jumps up and says, "You're such a wonderful example of forgiveness!" Which surprises me slightly, since I hadn't mentioned the word forgiveness.

You see, I received a letter bomb in April of 1990, three months after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. I know that the last white president was morally and politically responsible, but I don't know who made the bomb. I don't know who posted it, who gave the orders. So in a sense I have not yet forgiven anybody, because there's nobody yet to forgive. But perhaps, when I return to Cape Town, the doorbell will go, and someone will be there who says, "I am the one who sent you the letter bomb. Please will you forgive me?" I would have a prior question: "Do you still make letter bombs?" He says, "No, actually, I work at the local hospital." My response would be to say, "Yes of course I forgive you and I would prefer that you spend the next fifty years working at that hospital rather than be locked up in prison." Because I believe more in restorative justice than the justice of retribution.

Often when we say justice, we mean retribution if not revenge.

So, perhaps we would have tea together, then I might say, "Of course, you cannot return my hands, you cannot return the eye I lost, you cannot fix my eardrums, but you could assist me for the rest of my life with someone to help me, as a consequence of what happened to me." That would not be a condition of forgiveness; it would be a form of reparation and restitution, in the ways that are possible.

Sometimes, even though we might have mainly been the victim, we need to travel the journey of forgiveness for our own sake, as a form of healthy

selfishness, to let go, so we too can be free, free if you like to become wounded healers.

So my work is part of an institute for healing of memories, listening to the pain of the people of South Africa, and increasingly to the pain of the people of the world. Providing spaces where human beings can begin to acknowledge what has happened to them, have it heard, revered, recognized and begin to let go of that in the past which would destroy them, and take from the past that which is life-giving.

I would like to emphasise that there is not just one way, or even a best way of resolving conflict and healing memories. God is not limited in the ways that God can heal human beings.

The claims we make for the efficacy of our workshops have always been very modest. We promise people one step on the journey to healing and wholeness – whether a tiny step or for some a life changing step. We are in the process of an evaluation project. Let me give you just three quotes from recent workshop participants.

The effect of Healing of Memories workshops on participants

Three examples

A woman says

“At first it was painful for me to tell my story to a group of strangers during the workshop. My mother is coloured and we lived in the “coloured Township” during the apartheid era. The high tension amongst children of different race groups made living there difficult. Added to that was the problem of protecting my two brothers from my mum’s previous husband. Speaking out in the group gave me courage to acknowledge and reveal other things that I had locked away inside me. I spoke about being gay. I managed to say “This is who I am” and doing this brought relief and a willingness to face other fears and challenges in my life.

The workshop had also helped me to change the way I viewed the effect of South Africa history on my life. Since the workshop, I decided to forgive and let go of my anger and frustration from the apartheid era. I no longer feel the same level of anger that I used to carry towards apartheid perpetrators before the workshop. I am trying to educate my community in the township where I live, to live without continuing the hatred of racism, because it is destroying our South African society instead of bringing healing and progress.”

A woman

“I was very angry towards my parents, husband and my doctors before attending the Healing of Memories workshop.. I carried this anger for many years until I tried to commit suicide just before my first workshop.

I was angry towards my parents because they did not take care of me since I was born. My parents left me when I was one year old and I grew up with my grand mother. I met with my mother for the first time in 1984. Two years later in 1986, I met with my father for the first time. I was angry towards my husband because he is abusing me in different ways, physically and emotionally. I was also angry towards my doctors because they kept postponing my operation appointment since 1990 until October 2005. I have been carrying this heavy anger for many years.

When I attended the Healing of Memories workshop, I felt better, relieved. I realized that I had been carrying a heavy burden in me for many years without sharing with anybody. I have learnt not to blame and judge others but to focus on myself. I decided to forgive my parents, my husband and medical doctors and let go of my anger and frustration. After the workshop, I visited my mother and asked for forgiveness. I shared my experience with my husband for the first time. I do not have a plan for committing suicide anymore after the workshop. I am living in the positive way. I keep telling myself not to go back where I was before the workshop”.

A man

“My father had a small business but he could not run his business because he was black. The white people used to come and destroy everything in his house because he was not permitted to run the business as a black man. When my father passed away, my mother had to work for the whites in order to survive. My mother did not get a time to look after my family. I grew up with this anger and I have been carrying it for many years. When I attended my first workshop, it was more like being born again. I could look into myself and dig more personal issues that was really bothering my life. I could easily forgive, work into myself, discover who I am and my status in terms of anger. I identified the disease of keeping the anger within myself. I changed the way I view white people in the South Africa community. I could see the shift in my life after attending regularly workshops. I am happy for the work of the Institute for Healing of Memories in bringing whites, coloured and blacks together for

sharing their past experience that many of South Africans have never experienced before.”

We always focus on how the past of the country affects individuals: we continue to focus on national reconciliation. In a deliberative way we have also begun to focus on refugees, people in prison and people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

We have found it helpful to speak of multiple woundedness. Many people in our communities have layers of pain.

In relation to the AIDS pandemic decimating the nation we asked ourselves what our contribution could be. We realised that our particular contribution would be in doing what we do best: creating a safe space for people infected and affected by the disease to share their journey, to tell of their fears, pain, anxiety and concern for the future. After four trial workshops we did an evaluation.

Participants said that they now had a voice which they didn't have before. One said: “I was full of sadness, hatred and was broken hearted before I came to the workshop. After two workshops there is light and a way forward.” Another said: “Before the workshop, I was full of fear and tears. I dealt with my fears; I was given an opportunity to cry and this gave me hope for the future. A third woman said she realised the importance of healing the soul as well as the physical body, One person said she felt less alone.

Recently we have been approached to roll out a Healing of Memories project in six countries of Southern Africa

Since 1998 by invitation we have worked in other countries – taking us to Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Burundi, the UK, the US, Germany, Sri Lanka, Australia, Fiji to name some of the places where we have worked. Each place has its own unique character and yet at the deepest level human beings have within us, the same capacity for good and evil, the same range of negative and positive feelings. Across the world countries are haunted by their unfinished business.

Healing of Memories is something whose time has come in the human family – regardless of culture, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

For us as Christians, we are called to remind ourselves that at the heart of the Jesus story is good that comes out of evil, life that comes out of death. In the Jesus story, the victim becomes, not a victimiser but victorious.

The sacred space created in a healing of memories encounter enables participants and gives them the support to take a step towards healing – not making things perfect, not solving all problems – but yes making things better, enabling people to live with pain, ambiguity and contradiction with greater courage and hope.

My sisters and brothers, healing and reconciliation are not optional extras for Christians.

In the Institute we like to say “Every story needs a listener.” You can be in the same church for 50 years and have listened to many good and bad sermons – but never have had the opportunity to hear the stories of others, to tell your life story – to vomit out the poison and to take from the past that which is life giving.

For me, the most important request of the last Lambeth conference was the call for all of us to listen to the stories of gay and lesbian people. I salute Archbishop Njongonkulu for the way he has facilitated this listening process in this province.

A key part of the journey of healing is “being listened to”. If we were to go around this room and ask the question, Why am I an Anglican, there would I am sure be a range of answers. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we came back to Boksburg III in a few years time and asked that question and one after another people stood up and said – the anglican church was a place where i was not judged, a place where people were willing to listen to my story.

After I was bombed people from all over the world sent me messages of prayer and love and support – people of good will and people of different faith traditions – including seven of the Primates of the Anglican Communion. Today I want to say thankyou - for being God's instruments to enable me to make my bombing redemptive – to bring life out of death, good out of evil – to travel a journey from victim to survivor to victor.

When you look at me, what do you see – a person physically broken by war, a victim of racism and state terrorism – with no hands, only one eye, and damaged hearing. Of course that is true and we should not run away from facing the effect of what we do to each other. But I hope that you can see beyond that to see that even in a tiny way, I can be a sign to you that stronger than the forces of evil and hatred and death are the forces, of kindness, gentleness, justice and compassion, of life, of God.

I would like to end with a well known Franciscan blessing recently sent to me as I grieved for my colleague and friend: Ndukenhle Mtshali

May God bless you with discomfort
at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger
at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for God's justice, God's freedom, and God's peace.

May God bless you with tears
to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.