

# CONVERSATIO 2010



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St. Scholastica's Priory

Manila

Dear Sisters,

May 10, 2010, a much awaited date has come and gone. We thank God that as usual He showed that his power is greater than all the forces of darkness. The election was relatively peaceful and at least for the first days were fast is transmission. I think 2 factors made this possible—the vigilance of the people and their determination to exercise their democratic rights. I think the groups that literally hounded the COMELEC and Smartmatic kept them on their toes because they know their every move was being watched by vigilant citizenry. The second is the unceasing prayer we all engaged in. Friday masses, vigils, adoration, election prayers—we really stormed heaven so that there will be no failure of elections. So we hoped for the best and prepared for the worst. And although we did not exactly get the best, we did not get the worst either. But now after the first euphoric moment, it is still necessary that COMELEC and Smarmatic give an account of all the glitzes and extra expenses these glitzes added to the actual budget. Then the problem of disenfranchisement must be resolved by cleaning the voters' list already now. The many accusations of fraud etc should be faced. The system must be improved.

As for the new administration, we should remember our failure in EDSA 1 and 2 that after the events, we simply abandoned our vigilance. If we voted for this administration we have to keep on praying for them but also watching them so that they will fulfill their promises and bring about a fundamental change in our society. We will institutionalize a Citizwena' Watch for Good Governance!

So we look to the future with hope but resolve to continue our vigilance.

Sincerely yours,



Sr. Mary John, OSB

# 125TH JUBILEE STATIO CONFERENCE

## **FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION**

**By Daegu Priory**

“No man is an island” we love to sing. We are born into the human world; we are to be with others. We live with others and we form relationships with others. Through various encounters with other humans we grow and mature. God the Creator Himself said, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2: 18), and our Charism says, “The fundamental characteristic of our way of life is seeking God in community” and “Our common life finds its expression in praying and working together, in sharing our goods, both material and spiritual, and in mutual service, support and encouragement” (Constitutions 1: 3).

All of us are unique. We come from different families and different backgrounds. We have different types of training and different life-experiences. We are unique in our personality and in our character. Thus, when we are in a group, life becomes interesting, challenging, and at times problematic.

Living in a group becomes particularly problematic because, when we are together, we tend to compare ourselves with others. Certainly we understand many of our concepts through comparisons. For example, you are tall and I am short; you are slender and I am stout. Also, when we are in a group, soon we come to form consciously and unconsciously certain expectations for and from each other. The phenomenon of forming mutual expectations occurs also in groups of strangers. For example, we expect a certain degree of civility from each other. However, only when others do not meet our expectations, do we realize our expectations of them.

Certain psychologists have reported that in relationships emotional hurts and pains often come when comparisons are made and expectations are formed. Divorce attorneys have found that 80 % of divorces take place because of certain expectations held by the spouses. Often we are not aware of the fact that our pains come from the comparisons we make and the expectations we have.

Forgiveness is for-giving by one who feels has been hurt to one who is supposed to have hurt. Forgiveness and reconciliation are essential elements of community living. Because we often fail in our love for each other, we need forgiveness and renewal.

The Bible shows that making comparisons occurred at the very start of our human history; Adam and Eve dared to compare themselves with God and wanted to become like God and ate the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3: 3 – 5). When our tendency to compare ourselves with others is not mastered, there comes rivalry and often rivalry with enmity. Cain compared himself with his brother Abel; unable to master his rivalry but overtaken by it, he killed his brother, and thereby fatally hurt himself (Genesis 4: 1 – 16).

The biblical story of Joseph (Genesis 37; 39 – 50) exemplifies the whole process of comparison making, enmity, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Certainly we know the story. It is a story of a family where there should be love and care among the members. However, the members of the family acted as they wanted. The father of the family, Jacob, loved Joseph more than all other sons. The sons wanted and expected their father to love them equally. That was the beginning of the problem.

Let us, however, ask ourselves, “Is it possible to love everyone equally?” If we are honest, we will say that it is not possible for us to love all equally. Likewise we cannot expect others to love us equally. Furthermore, loving equally is difficult to measure both in terms of quality and in terms of quantity. Yet we expect to be loved “equally” by others and how foolish we are! Because we make comparisons and form expectations we get hurt and experience pain; yet we continue to make comparisons and form expectations.

Certainly Jacob had his reason for loving Joseph more than his other sons. Joseph was the son of his beloved Rachel and in his old age! Jacob expressed his special love for Joseph by giving him a coat with colorful long sleeves, made just for him. The other sons compared themselves with the favored “beloved” boy; comparing the love given to them by the father with the love they saw given to Joseph. The brothers of Joseph saw inequality, and their expectation of equal love by the father was frustrated. The brothers of Joseph came to hate Joseph so much that they could not even say a kind word to him. To make the situation worse, Joseph had certain dreams; the dreams seemed to forecast the future superiority of Joseph over his brothers, and Joseph had no hesitation in detailing his dreams to his brothers. In the end, the brothers became extremely jealous of Joseph, their own brother (Genesis 37: 11).

When the brothers pastured the flock in distant places, Jacob sent Joseph to see the brothers. But seeing Joseph approaching them, the brothers plotted to get rid of him, “the darling” of their father. When Joseph arrived, the brothers divested Joseph of his coat with long sleeves, the symbol of the father’s favorite love. Then they sold him to foreigners to be slave. The brothers thought: now Joseph sold to be slave for his life would have no chance in the future to obtain superior status over them and furthermore, now being taken to a far distant land, Joseph would have no further relations with them.

For thirteen years Joseph went through incredible sufferings and hardships. In these most painful years of his life, Joseph came to encounter God and began to see the providence of God working through the dark stages of his life (Genesis 38: 9, 21; 40: 8; 41: 16, 25 – 32). How Joseph suffered is shown in the names Joseph gave to his sons. “Manasseh – God has made me forget all my suffering and my father’s entire household” and Ephraim – “God has made me fruitful in the country of my misfortune” (Genesis 41: 51 – 52). Furthermore the people with Joseph also saw how God was with Joseph and acknowledged Joseph as a channel of God’s blessing (Genesis 39: 4 – 5).

At the end, the time came for Joseph to meet “his enemies” who had sold him into slavery. At the first encounter with them, Joseph did not tell them who he was. Only at the third encounter Joseph revealed himself to them. The first step to forgiveness and reconciliation is looking at the pain and the hurt and accepting them. Joseph simply stated the fact to them, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you once sold into Egypt.” At these words of Joseph, the brothers could not say a word. However, Joseph told the brothers, “Now, do not grieve, and do not

reproach yourselves for having sold me here.” Further Joseph invited his brothers to see the hand of God working through it all. “Since God sent me before you to preserve your lives... to make sure that your race would have a survivor in the land to save your lives, many lives at that... so it was not you who sent me here but God (Genesis 45: 1 – 8).

If we look only at the faults and count only the failures of others, forgiveness and reconciliation would be impossible. Forgiveness and reconciliation are possible only when we fix our sight not on our wickedness and failures but on God who loves and cares for each one of us, who is able to write straight on crooked lines, and who transforms the wrong doing into saving acts.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are not a matter of our choice; forgiveness and reconciliation are a matter of our obligation.

When Jacob, their father, had died, the brothers asked Joseph again for forgiveness. The brothers said to Joseph, “Before your father died, he gave us this order: “You must say to Joseph: “Oh, forgive your brothers their crime and their sin and all the wrong they did you.” Further the brothers told Joseph, “We present ourselves before you as your slaves.” However, Joseph replied: “Do not be afraid; is it for me to put myself in God’s place?” (Genesis 50: 16 – 19). None of us who often fail in love has the right to refuse forgiveness.

Our Constitutions (Chapter 4:4) also says, “We who continually receive God’s mercy are enabled and obliged to forgive one another sincerely after failures....” Sometimes, however, they can only be borne in patience and prayer. Through the difficult yet liberating service of reconciliation, healing takes place in and through our community. Thus, we strive to become ever more communities of peace.”

Our Father who art in heaven, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us!

Readings: Mt 18.21-25; Mt. 6.9-15; Mt. 5.23-24; Constitutions IV.4

### **Guide Questions for Reflection:**

1. What are the causes of conflict?
2. What are the underlying causes of conflict in your community?
3. What are the ways to deal with conflict?

**GOLDEN JUBILEE HOMILY  
MAY 8, 2010  
By Abbot Tarcisio Narciso, OSB**

Golden Jubilee of Mother Mary John Mananzan, Sr. Monica Tomista, Sr. Fe Andrea Collantes, Sr. Baptista Busmente, Sr. Roberta Ilumin, Sr. Celestine, May 3, 2010

## ST. SCHOLASTICA'S PRIORY

My dear Rev. Mother Mary John, Rev. Sisters Monica, Fe Andrea, Baptista, Roberta, Reverend Fathers, Reverend Sisters, Families and Friends of our Jubilarians, my dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Today is truly a great day. Golden Jubilees are rare. But this day is even greater because we are celebrating an important milestone in the lives of six Benedictine Sisters (Sr. Celestine can not be present here physically today), who are not ordinary mortals! We have a term that aptly describes them – “mulieres fortes” or “strong women” of this Priory. Yes, strong women, because I can consider them among its pillars and of the community. Not just because of who they are, but also because of the magnanimous contributions they have given not just to this Priory but to the whole church as well. Their lives have truly been lived in an evangelical way. Through a life flowing with unselfishness and generosity and through their quiet and sometimes not so quiet prophetic witnessing, they have touched our lives and transformed our hearts. Today, we celebrate not just a jubilee, but most of all, the goodness and kindness of the Lord incarnated in their lives.

### TIME AND ETERNITY

Fifty years is a long time. We wonder sometimes where have all the years gone. But is the past simply a subject of looking back at memorable events? Is the past simply time lost and will never come back? Is the past simply time gone forever? We know that it simply cannot be because one coherent storyline they have lived is their deep faith and trust in God.

One of the things done in the preparation of this homily is a reading of the poem by T.S. Eliot entitled “Four Quartets”. In this poem, T. S. Eliot speaks of time, eternity and immortality. For him, time is a conception to measure eternity. It is the moving image of eternity. Let me quote the first lines of Quartet 1:

**Time present and time past**

**Are both perhaps present in the time future,**

**And time future contained in time past ....**

**If all time is eternally present**

**All time is unredeemable.**

This is the mystery of time – time is never lost. All time is embraced by eternity. All time is one in Our Lord Jesus, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end! The past fifty years of the consecrated life of our jubilarians are made present to us today! We look at them and see all the fifty years in one moment, in the now, and we see the richness of the grace of God unfolding before our eyes. For jubilee is the gift of sharing in the timelessness of God.

## BIBLICAL JUBILEE

The only jubilee celebration that is truly biblical is the golden jubilee. When we speak of “jubilee” in the Bible, the ram’s horn is blown to announce the beginning of the fiftieth year. The ram’s horn was called the yobel, which in Greek was “yabalaos” or “yubilum” which meant joyous shouting and festivity. But it was a call to renewal of life, a re-commitment to the Lord, an invitation to live more closely our covenant with the Lord. The Book of Leviticus gives guidelines on how to celebrate jubilee. They were not liturgical or ceremonial prescriptions, but the transformation of community and society.

The land will have a complete rest, all land were to be returned to its rightful owner, all debts were to be forgiven, all slaves were to be freed, and all arguments settled. It was a time for renewal, a chance to forgive and forget and to start all over again. “It shall be a jubilee for you... Every one of you will return to his ancestral home, each to his own clan... The Jubilee shall be a holy and sacred thing for you.... Do not deal unfairly with your neighbor or exploit him.... Observe my precepts and be careful to keep my regulations, for then you will dwell securely in the land. The land will yield its fruit and you will have food in abundance, so that you may live there without worry and securely” (Leviticus 25:11-19).

The celebration of jubilee according to Leviticus must be both in festivity and in holiness. It is not only the feasting and celebrations; there must be renewal of holiness. The jubilee must also be a holy thing. “If you live according to my precepts, I will establish peace in the land that you may lie down to rest without anxiety. I will set my dwelling among you and I will never cast you off. I will live in your midst and I will be your God and you will be my people” (Leviticus 26:11-13)

A celebration of jubilee therefore, must be a celebration of holiness and spirituality. Injuries and grudges should be forgiven and forgotten. There should be no hatred or injustice in our lives. We are not to lend money at interest or food at profit. We should not make slaves of those around us, whether it be wife or husband, or children, or employee or friend. We should not in any way lord it over anyone harshly. Help is extended to the anawim, to those who suffer poverty in all dimensions. Share what you have with those who do not have. Do not be afraid to fight for what is right. For only in this way can our covenant with the Lord become a reality in our life.

## DAILY RESURRECTION

Since we are in the Easter season, it is good to remind ourselves that perseverance and faithfulness will always involve a daily Resurrection. There are times when we get weary, exhausted, and even lose heart. We are human and we can not avoid falling – into depression, bitterness, sin, betrayal, cynicism and tiredness. Like Jesus, we too have our crucifixions. More than one grave awaits us. Yet our faith in the resurrection invites us precisely to live beyond these. What the resurrection teaches us is not how to live – but how to live again, and again and again! We can never give up. We must never give up! Things can always be new again. It’s never too late to start over. Nothing is irrevocable. No betrayal is final. No sin is unforgivable.

No sin can overpower the love of Christ for us and in us. Every form of death can be overcome. There isn't any loss that can't be redeemed.

There are no doors that are eternally closed, every time we close a door or one is closed on us, God opens another for us. The resurrection assures us that God never gives up on us, even if we give up on ourselves, that God, as we usually say, writes straight with the crooked lines of our lives. Resurrection is not just a question of one day, after death, rising from the dead, but it is also about our daily rising from the many min-graves within which we so often find ourselves, or have dug ourselves into. We are always open to surprise, newness and freshness in our lives, and may I add, no matter how old we are!

## CONCLUSION

Let me close by quoting the final words of the Prologue, which it is believed St. Benedict wrote after he finished writing the whole Rule:

“For as we advance in the religious life and in faith, our hearts expand, and we run the way of God's commandments with unspeakable sweetness of love. Thus, never departing from His school but persevering according to His teaching until death, we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ (1Peter 4:13) and deserve to have a share also in His kingdom.” Let us also remember the words of Jesus addressed to His apostles and to us: “I chose you out of this world.”

These are the words we live by. Our six jubilarians have given the example of stability of heart and mind, the stability of humility and patience. Let us be filled with gratitude for the gift of their persons in our midst. And we ask them also to pray for our own perseverance that we will also be able to celebrate in the spirit of true holiness our own jubilee.

God bless us all!

## Pentecost by Fr. Brian Joyce

Christmas, Easter and Pentecost are the three most important feasts of the Christian year and the Christian calendar. And Pentecost always comes in a distant third. We never have a Pentecost tree. We never have Pentecost presents. We never have Pentecost family gatherings. And, God help us, we never have a Pentecost egg hunt.

What Pentecost is really about, because there is no infant in a crib or empty tomb to make it clear for us? Instead we get a dove. We get wind. We get fire, and we get red shirts and maybe red socks. That's what I have. What is Pentecost really about? You know, I gather with a group of preachers and ministers each Tuesday morning to look at the feast coming up, and that was a question one of the Catholic preacher asked last Tuesday morning. What is Pentecost really about? And he gave an excellent answer. He said it is about the reality of Jesus Christ today, his vision, his power, his presence, his influence in our lives and in our world today, and the power of the Spirit of God that makes it happen. This is how it happened. The source of

making the real Jesus present in today is God Almighty, God's own self, God's own spirit. And that's what we remember and that's what we celebrate on Pentecost, grounded in God himself. And the shape it takes is the shape of Jesus Christ, whether you talk about of Jesus of Nazareth and his teaching and his death and resurrection or Jesus whom we meet in the Eucharist or Jesus whom we meet on in one another, whom we as the Jesus Movement that we call the Church. That's the source, God Almighty. That's the shape Jesus Christ. And the result, the future, the goal, the destiny.

The long-range plan, Jesus announce, is "Shalom" we translate it as "Peace" but peace can just mean there is no war going on. Shalom means a complete healing, a complete wholeness for all of us and all our world and its future. The result is to be Shalom. Now, here's the tricky part. Jesus also says the strategy to get there, (Are you ready?) the strategy is forgiveness. Didn't it ever seem strange to you? Jesus comes to the disciples on the first day of the week and he says, "Peace be with you" and then he start talking about forgiveness. The strategy to bring Shalom tom our world is forgiveness, and it ain't easy! That's a tough sell I know. I'm Irish. I a have priest friend who said to me, 'You know the Irish way of forgiveness is to say "I forgive. I forget. But I will remember". "People have talked about Irish Alzheimers and called it "We forget everything except the grudges". But it applies to everybody. I remember there was the Irish play, "Da" and it talked about remembrance and forgiveness in the family. I saw it on the Broadway and, in a matinee show; most of the people attending were Jewish matrons. And, during the intermission, one Jewish matron was saying to another, "This play isn't about Irish. It's about us. It's about us Jews". It's about all of us. It's about Filipinos too.

You know, it is not easy to follow strategy of forgiveness. So, what are the steps? The steps are clear in the feast of Pentecost. What was the first step? We think about the gift of tongues. But those are tongues of fire. The gift was the gift of hearing. We are amazed. Each of us hears and understands in our own language. God gave, through his Spirit, the gift of hearing. We have to learn to listen to one another, to different people, people who differ from us, and we have to understand. We have to.... (I always quote Cardinal Seunens, teaching at Sproul Hall in Berkeley and saying, "God had it alright. God gave us two ears and one mouth." We have to listen twice as much as we speak. The gift of hearing, we pray for that.

The gift of community. Each one hears in their own language, in their own tongue. We are called to be one. But each in its own community, with its own culture, its own style, its own language, its own history, its own traditions. And yet, we are one. That's why we gave thanks to Pentecost weekend, that we have are Filipino community sharing their style and their traditions and their devotions with us, that we welcome and give thanks for the richness and style of one another. And yet we are one. The gift of hearing, the gift of oneness and diversity.....

And finally, the gift of hope! Those disciples went out and change the world. And where were they to begin with? Behind locked doors! What locked the doors? Was it a combination of lock? No. was it a padlock? No. was it a Yale lock? No. the gospel tells us they were locked up by fear. They were locked by fear. We have more than enough fear to go around. And the Spirit of God gives us the hope that allows us to break out the fear and change the world and make a difference.

What are our fears? We have big fears. We have little fears. And got to tell you, the little fears are the big ones. We have the fear of Global Warming. And we have the fear, of personal loneliness. That's the big one. We have the fear of what to do in Iraq and the war and terrorism.

And we have the fear of personal depression. That's the big one. We have the fear of all kinds of issues of justice, workers being fired aimlessly in Emeryville today, the School of Americas training people to really attack their own citizens, the problem of immigration, and the problem of homeless. And we also have the fear of our family problems, our family security, and our family future. That's the big one. We have the fear of world hunger and fear about our own health. Just got a call from a dear friend yesterday. He's diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Those are the big ones. The powerful spirit can come through and unlock the doors of fear by giving us hearing to one another and community and hope. So we have to pray about it. So that's what I'm going to suggest. You know, I used to have those four-minute specials. I'm going to ask four minutes of meditation. I am going to suggest we sit quietly, maybe put your hands in your lap and even cup them, a sign that you are open to received the spirit to be poured out in you. Let's sit back and meditate and pray, "Come Holy Spirit, Come."