

# Conference on Reconciliation and Change

Father Robert Schreiter—"A Roadmap to the Reconciliation Process"

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Miami Dade College, Wolfson Campus

## Father Robert Schreiter—A Roadmap to the Reconciliation Process:

Archbishops Wenski's opening words provide an excellent introduction for what I have been asked to do with you here today, and especially in this opening presentation. It's called a "Roadmap to the Reconciliation Process," and I will be explaining each of those terms here in a few minutes. But as Carlos Saladrigas said, and then Archbishop also, there are many different understandings of what reconciliation is, and especially "social reconciliation," where we are talking about larger groups. And the term trips rather easily off the lips of so many.

I teach a course on reconciliation in Chicago every year. And a couple of years ago, when General Petraeus was still in charge of the armed forces in Iraq, I had a soldier in the class who had just come back from Iraq, and he brought me the letter that General Petraeus had sent to all of the troops. The term "reconciliation" was in about every third line, not always meaning the same thing. So the term is used widely, it is used loosely, and also over time it accretes to itself meanings from particular communities, and that has already been alluded to here. That for some, in the Cuban community, reconciliation is a dirty word; and not only in Cuba has that been the case. It was the case in Argentina after the "Guerra Sucia," the "Dirty War" there; the situation has now changed a bit. So it is used loosely, and I think especially for people who have suffered harm, are rightfully leery about what the word is meant to convey, especially when it is on the lips of those who have not suffered, who are kind of intruding themselves into the process, thinking they can bring reconciliation. And even worse, when it is on the lips of those who have inflicted the harm. That was the case in Argentina. The people said "Oh, let's put the past behind us, let's go forward together." Almost consistently, the people who were saying that were the people who had inflicted the harm.

So I want to begin by what reconciliation *is not*, and then turn to what reconciliation *is*.

First of all, reconciliation is not about forgetting the wrongdoing of the past as though it never happened. We have that phrase "forgive and forget" in English, and also in many other languages, and it's really bad advice. If something significant has happened to you in this way, has harmed you, injured you, violated you, you can't forget it. And to be forced to forget it is to be victimized once again. Reconciliation is not about that. We have to remember the past, and I'll talk in a few minutes here more about what that means.

Secondly, reconciliation is not about condoning the wrongdoing. Saying that, "it really does not matter," or "it happened so long ago that we can really do nothing about it." Reconciliation, as we are going to see, is about relationships. And we cannot simply set some relationships aside, even bad ones, if we want to have a better future.

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Reconciliation is also not the opposite of justice. One of the questions I get asked a lot is “Well, what is the relationship between reconciliation and justice?” “Can you have reconciliation without justice?” Or, “Can you only have reconciliation when there is full justice?” This is one of the knottiest questions to be addressed and I’ll be talking a little more about it later. A lot has to do, we will see, with what we mean when we say “We want justice.” What are we looking for?

Reconciliation is also not about—and this has already been mentioned—appeasing wrongdoers or giving them more time.

So, as was noted, some Cubans have been reluctant to travel to Cuba because this in a way supports the totalitarian regime that is there; it gives them a little more income, it keeps them going. Reconciliation is not about that as well.

And finally, reconciliation is not a false forgiveness; a forgiveness in which wrongdoers don’t deal with the consequences of their actions; that’s not reconciliation either. Sometimes the term reconciliation is used because people are frightened of dealing with all the conflict that has gone on; a fear that it is going to come back, or they will be overwhelmed by it.

Well, after that litany of what reconciliation is not, what is reconciliation?

Perhaps in its simplest form, reconciliation is about rebuilding “right relationships” where those relationships have been broken, twisted, or harmed in any kind of way. It is about rebuilding those relationships, sustaining those relationships, and being faithful to those relationships. So, reconciliation is never just about one person, one wrongdoer, or one victim; it is about the relations between them. It’s about rebuilding first of all trust; and trust can only be rebuilt if there is safety. *Safety. Trust.* And it’s a long process.

The second thing I want to say about reconciliation—and it is really important for what we are trying to do here today—is that reconciliation is both a goal we hope to attain, an endpoint to a long and difficult path, but it’s also the path itself; it is the process itself. I think most of us automatically jump to the end because we want to see what it is going to be and not think about everything that has to be done along the way. People say it’s long, *yes*, arduous, *yes*, linear, *no*, it’s not linear, it moves in and out all the time, requires patience, *yes, yes*. But I’m going to focus today particularly on the process, and one of the reasons for that is that the goal starts to look different as you go through the process. It’s like if you go into the central part of the United States, into the flatlands of the plains. When you first see the Rocky Mountains in the distance, you kind of think you know what they are, but as you get closer that picture changes. And so to, we see, with what is reconciliation. What seems to be the most demanding thing in the beginning is not really the most important thing when we draw close. It’s not linear, it’s not quick, but it can be done. And as has already been pointed out, and we will hear again here shortly, this is a question that is going on in so many different places in the world today, and a number of places are kind of in the situation, in general, that we are in here with Cuba. We are perhaps just getting up to the cusp of a change, and the key then is to be ready for that and to know what we are able to do.

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So what I am going to try and do in this presentation is give something of a roadmap. By *roadmap* here, I don't mean *recipe*. That if you have two tablespoons of this, two teaspoons of that, and a pinch of something else, you will have a formula you can whip up and call reconciliation. Reconciliation doesn't work that way. There are parallels and similarities in different kinds of situations, but they are never really the same; the histories are not the same, the duration is not the same, and as a result of that, you can't simply impose a single strategy. Nor, if it is not a recipe, nor is it a GPS, where you can punch in where you want to go and then follow it step-by-step, where you turn right, where you turn left, when you stop, and so on. No, it is a roadmap in the sense that it gives you a sense of a bigger lay of the land that we have to deal with, and the kinds of issues that are going to continue to come forward in this as we go.

So let me launch, then, into that. There are really two big parts to reconciliation-as-process as I see it; two big parts.

The first part is healing the past, so it's backward looking, it's looking back at what has happened, it is looking back and taking seriously what has happened, but also coming to realize that it is *the past*. And the question then becomes "how much are we going to let the past determine the future?" The one half is healing the past, the other half is building the future. And

I've said already that reconciliation is not a linear process, so this is not sequential either: first you finish healing the past, and then you build the future. No, they happen all together, because they illuminate each other, they raise questions as we'll see, for each other, as we go along.

So, let me begin by talking about healing the past. In the case of Cuba, 54-years and counting of a past, the first thing we need to do is acknowledge the wounds we carry as individuals and as a community. These are wounds of loss, betrayal, of acute suffering and continuing suffering, of division. These are all embedded in the stories that we tell about what happened. And they must be acknowledged. And by acknowledged I mean they must be made public in the sense that we don't just carry them around just in ourselves, but that others have the chance to hear them and to affirm them: "Yes, this is what happened." This kind of making external, the wounds we carry, is one of the key elements in dealing with them, because wounds tend to isolate us and by making them external, where others can acknowledge them, we begin to bring them into a place where relationships can be rebuilt.

It's important to realize that this is a process of truth telling, that's very, very important. When you are dealing with a totalitarian regime, such as the Castro government, you have a culture of lies that you have to deal with. I've heard stories about what children are taught in school that don't fit what they see around them. Lies sustain authoritarian governments. Lies about the people themselves, lies about the people who are enemies. And by acknowledging our wounds we begin a process of truthfulness. And truth, here, means more than the facts fit our words or our language. In the Old Testament, the words often translated as "truth" in English also means "reliability," "dependability," "steadfastness." In other words, truth is tied up with trust, our capacity to trust. And if you want, in the smallest possible way to say what reconciliation is, it is about restoring trust where trust has been broken. And trust is the most fundamental thing that makes it possible for us to be in a relationship at all.

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We acknowledge wounds, and we must also realize, the deep wounds—and there are many deep wounds connected—with the story of Cuba. And I should here also say that I have a Cuban sister-in-law, who came here to Miami when she was 8-years old, and she lives in Texas now. We had quite a conversation when she found out that I was coming down here today about this. Deep wounds never entirely heal; that is they do not come to a point where they entirely disappear as though they never happened. They always somehow remain. The question then becomes how we relate to those wounds.

I think, for Christians, one of the most dramatic images we have is in John's Gospel, Chapter 20, where Jesus appears to his disciples after the Resurrection. He walks through a locked door; so his body has obviously been changed, it is his resurrection body. And then what does he do? He shows them the wounds in his hands and his side. Now, if you were designing a resurrection body that had been through torture, humiliation, abjection, and severe pain, ending with asphyxiation—that's what happens when you are crucified—what would be the first

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thing you would want to get rid of? The wounds. But they are still there. And the question becomes, "what does Jesus do with his wounds?" I'll come back to that in a moment here. The wounds are still there, and what becomes important is how we relate to those wounds. If they remain open, they can become infected, they can become toxic for us and the people around us. And we see this in communities that have suffered a great deal. Some people cannot get over what has happened to them. And it can even turn into competition: "My wounds are deeper than your wounds, so you have no right to even address my wounds." These kinds of things go on in these communities. I've worked a lot with the Vietnamese community—another community of people forced into exile—where I live in Chicago. We have two large communities of exiles from the Second World War, Ukrainians and Lithuanians, and I have been able to observe what happens when they go back, and we will talk about that when we talk about the future here in a minute. But when they are toxic, they continue to control our lives. And so what does it mean when wounds heal? When wounds of loss, betrayal, of suffering, memory of traumatic events, it means that the wounds no longer control our lives. They are still there; they can still be evoked.

Three days ago, we remembered September 11<sup>th</sup>. And as I was thinking, there is another September 11<sup>th</sup> date that is very important in Latin American history, and that was the coup in Chile in 1973. That was also September 11<sup>th</sup>. To think of it here, the survivors of those who died in the twin-towers; those wounds are still there, but the question is, do they control our lives? Or, if they heal sufficiently, can they become a means of healing others?

I'd like to give you briefly here my reading -it is perhaps a little idiosyncratic- of Jesus and his wounds in John, Chapter 20. I'm going to be using a lot of examples out of Christian faith. One of the things when we talk about the future is that you have to have a moral platform to work out of and from if you are going to be engaged in the work of reconciliation. And that moral platform can be a commitment to human rights, a commitment to the dignity of every human being, it can be a religious one—mine is clearly a religious one—but it doesn't exclude those others. Carlos Saladrigas, in his opening remarks, mentioned that the logic that creates conflict cannot be used to solve conflict. If that's the case, then where else do you stand? That's the moral platform that I'll be talking about here in a minute.

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But let me give you, out of the three episodes in Chapter 20 of John's Gospel, the first one. The first one is with Magdalene, Mary Magdalene, in the garden. She is looking for the body of Jesus—you probably remember the story, most of you—and someone comes up to her, and she thinks it's the caretaker until he says her name, and then she realizes who it is and she reaches out to embrace Jesus, and then rather enigmatically Jesus says "don't touch me." In the next episode, he appears to his disciples and shows them his wounds. And in the third episode in this triptych, he invites Thomas to come touch his wounds, whereas two episodes earlier he told Magdalene not to touch him at all. Is there something going on here? I think it teaches us something about wounds both of individuals and of communities. In the first instance with wounds, we don't know what to do with them. We may even try and hide them, fearing that if people find out we are wounded they will stay away from us as if we are contagious. Perhaps Jesus did not quite know what to do with his wounds, which is why he said to Magdalene "Don't touch me." By the second episode, he shows them his wounds, and sometimes we read that like, you know, showing your identity card or your driver's license, "yep, I'm the one." But it's also that he is in a point now that he realizes that his wounds are a part of who he will be, and they have to figure into the relationships that he has. And by that third episode, where he invites Thomas to touch his wounds, his wounds can become sources of healing for others. And with our deep wounds, if they can come to that measure of healing, they can help with the healing of others. And the experience that the exile community has gone through, the experiences, become a resource if they reach that level of healing, for the healing of Cuba, when the time comes when that can be done in a larger sort of way.

What all this teaches us, I think, about wounds comes back to what has already been said; we cannot look at reconciliation as a zero-sum game. It's not a matter of winning or losing; it is a matter of building relationships, our capacity to do that. And to the extent that we are unable to heal because we refuse to heal—and there are people who want to stay victims—as long as that is the case, it is back, really, to a zero-sum game, because the one who inflicted the wound is winning, is keeping us right where he wants us. We are going to see this is key for forgiveness as well. At that point we become no longer victims, we become people whose wounds can heal others- people who have been tortured, who are able to get to this state, call themselves survivors.

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When we think of it socially, about Cuba, it might be better to say, we are not victims anymore, we are citizens. In other words, part of the nation building that will need to go on. And this echoes what we have in one of the great passages about reconciliation in the New Testament. In the second chapter on the Letter to the Ephesians, which is about the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles, and it's addressed to the Gentile community, who feel that they are being pushed away by the Jewish community. And the passage says "You were once far off, without covenant, without promise, but through Christ Jesus you have been brought near," and then goes to describe how Christ has done that, and ends and says, "And now you are fellow citizens in the household of God, build upon the Apostles and Prophets with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone." We become full citizens in that particular way.

So healing the past is an on-going process. It is one that is never entirely completed. It is of course most important for the generation, the first generation, the generation who experienced exile, who experienced the situation in Cuba -prisons,

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reeducation, the division of families, all of those kinds of things- it affects them the most, but it is never entirely complete because there can be parts of it that are within us that we don't even know are there that get evoked by certain things happening.

But where is justice in all of this, in healing the past? Healing is a medical metaphor, but the issue of justice is often foremost in people's minds, so where does that fit?

Justice, like reconciliation itself, has both a forward and backward look; looking to the past, looking to the future. When many people who have been harmed talk about justice, they're talking about punishment; punishing the wrongdoers for what they have done. And that's an understandable, and I would say necessary, feeling or emotion, because it is an affront to our dignity as human beings, as sons and daughters of God, that we have been treated in this fashion; we have been treated as less than human, as not mattering.

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The danger of this kind of justice, of course, is that the feelings can so overwhelm us that what we really want to do is sort of flatten our enemy, and that is using the logic of violence to end violence, and I think history teaches us pretty much that this does not help. You sometimes need to use that kind of force to stop things from happening, but there was a mention here earlier about Germany after the Second World War. Archbishop Wenski mentioned it. I think we should also look at what happened to Germany after the First World War, this kind of total punishment was set in place: heavy fines, loss of territory, and it was the seedbed for National Socialism. People were humiliated, they resented it, they found a strong leader, and we had another war. So justice has to be used with great prudence. It is important as we will see with forgiveness.

Forgiveness does not rule out punishment. So justice as it looks backward—I want to use that now as a bridge to looking toward the future- justice also has a forward look. And it is discussed today particularly in the criminal justice system in this country and in a number of other countries—it started in Norway—justice that is restorative justice, justice that helps build a different kind of future in which the wrongdoer is punished, but the punishment is meant as a prelude to bring the wrongdoer back into the community. So justice is central here.

At the same time, we have to be realistic; justice can only restore so much. It cannot bring back the dead. It cannot bring back the years that people have lost in separation and division or imprisonment. It can't bring any of those back. But, the exercise of justice also says we are now living in a different kind of society that does not tolerate the things that have happened heretofore. So let's turn a little to the future. What does it mean to build the future?

The first thing to say is the future is not going to be the past before all the bad stuff happened. Cuba in the future will not be the Cuba of pre-1959. Because so much has changed and—all of you can answer this better than I—what made the revolution even acceptable in some quarters; somebody must have been feeling that they weren't being treated well. But I

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don't want to dwell there. The thing is we move to a different future. In one of the signature passages on reconciliation in the New Testament, in Second Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 5, Verse 17, it begins by saying "if anyone is in Christ, it is a new creation." What we are doing with the future here is a new creation; it is a creation that includes the past, that does not forget the past, but has a different perspective on the past and so brings it to a new place. And the key for working with building the new future is realizing just how things have changed; how in the healing, victims have changed. Many victims, for example, on the justice question, I have seen in some places, when it comes to getting justice, if their harm has been acknowledged, and publically pronounced that they were harmed and should not have been harmed, what they did was not bad but was good, the need for justice at least as punishment, is not nearly as strong anymore. The truth is a very powerful thing. "The truth will make you free", Jesus says in John's Gospel.

There is a certain freedom that comes with living in the truth. We know we cannot go back to our pre-wounded lives, but those wounds again no longer control what kind of future we may have. That's the important kind of thing.

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And around this point, I mentioned, that in Chicago where I am we have a large Lithuanian and Ukrainian exile community from the Second World War—they fled the communist regimes that were taking over—in the Ukraine

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they had been there for a while, it was an opportunity to leave. And in the intervening forty-years they worked very hard to prepare to go back, so their children, rather than watching cartoons on Saturday morning, went to language school, so they would keep up the language. Well, 1990 came and it was possible to go back. And some of the people I knew in the community and had been very strong leaders in this regard, did go back, but most of them were back in Chicago in a couple of months because they said "this is not a Ukraine I remembered, nor is it a Ukraine I would want to live in." And I think as we think about Cuba—and one of the great advantages which you have at this point is the possibility to visit Cuba, it's not just an imagined place out there that recedes in our memory because it's been so long since we have been there—what totalitarian regimes do to a society, they break down its civility and the Archbishop referred to that already in terms of trust—and that's the thing that get broken. Totalitarian regimes work to make every individual feel isolated and dependent on the government. They do that by setting up spying systems where people report on one another, they undermine so many different patterns. Cubans, as I know you, are very hardworking people. What happens to countries under those kinds of regimes is that they cease to be hardworking because hard work does not get you anywhere.

I spent two months last year in the former East Germany, and one of the remarkable things I noticed, they were reconstructing the building next to where I was living, it was the original building of the university, from 1392, and there was more standing around than anything else. And I asked about this—these are still patterns left over from the former East Germany. You were going to get paid and it didn't make any difference, so people lack initiative, they lack sometimes ways of operating together.

In the late 1990's I was in Croatia a great deal, and I remember on one occasion there was going to be a national dialogue between ministers out of the cabinet of the government and the bishops. And it was set up on the capitol, which is this big plateau in the middle of Zagreb, with the cathedral and the national theatre and so on. Well, in the national theatre we

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had this with a full audience. And since I was from far away they put me on the stage, too. And, of course the whole thing was going on in Croatian and I don't speak Croatian, but after the dialogue it was opened up to the public and within ten minutes there was a shouting match. And I was sitting next to the vice-prime minister and he leaned over and said to me, "You have to excuse us, we don't know how to talk to each other in public, because we've never been allowed to."

So if you think rebuilding the future in Cuba, after 54-years that is two generations of people who do not know how to operate in a civil society but have found other ways of being together. That becomes a feature that we need to think about as we rebuild the future.

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We know we have changed if our wounds have healed to some measure. We need to know that the people there -and even the people in charge- have changed, and find that out, separate the role from the person. No doubt, some of those who lead may no longer believe in the Revolution but no longer have anywhere else go, or have advantages they know they will lose if it moves otherwise. So what we need to do is move toward the future of right-relationships. The efforts that I know about—and I only know of a few, that are coming from the Cuba Study Group and from some of the other groups that are represented here to Cuba—is a key element in the reconciliation process, of building relationships, of building new social spaces where people can come together and learn to trust one another in public.

I want to touch here on one particular item that is of real importance. And it's the generational issue. And I want to talk here about three generations: the first generation, by first generation I mean the people who left the island, starting in 1959 or after 1959, who left the island as adults. In other words, their basic personalities had largely been formed and came here, or went to Spain, or wherever. And then the second generation; the second generation are those who came here as children or were born here shortly after their parents arrived. And the third generation are the children of the second generation, the grandchildren of the first generation. As you look around the world, what I've seen in so many places, those of the first generation who have suffered deep trauma from their experience will find it the most difficult to come to healing because their personalities have been largely formed and it is hard to incorporate that kind of larger change. Some people do, I am not ruling that out. But as a pattern, this will be the case.

The second generation, who came here as children, so completed their adolescence here, or were born here shortly thereafter, know the story of leaving Cuba largely from how it's been told to them by their parents. They want to be loyal to their parent's experience and sufferings but they have also grown up in a little different world; a world that is not Cuba. So they find themselves sometimes in-between, even in their loyalties. I mentioned that I work a lot with the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese have a high-Confucian ethic. Your parents decide whom you are going to marry and what your profession is going to be. Well, the with the second generation Vietnamese there is huge conflict within those families because they are being socialized into a world that says neither of those take place. Unfortunately, there is a significant suicide rate among young people, partially just trying to deal with that reality.

And then the third generation, who admires their grandparents and want to hear their story, but this really does not connect with them at all, and it is really hard to keep their attention and interest in these topics.

We have a large Jewish community in Chicago as you do here in Miami, and when Holocaust observance day comes around in April each year there is inevitably a story in the newspaper about elderly people going to Temple, to Synagogue,

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to commemorate this and working hard to get their grandchildren to come with them. Or, I heard this in Hungry a couple of years ago, the young people saying “Why do we have to talk about 1990 all the time.” This happened before they were born. So engaging young people becomes part of the task of building the future as well.

So, the things that are going to contribute to a genuinely civil society, understanding how people change, ourselves, and is even going to be the case, even with the wrongdoers, is essential in all of this.

And the final thing about building the future I want to talk about is the delicate but necessary issue of forgiveness.

Can forgiveness happen? The answer is yes, but I believe only at the end of a long process of healing. There cannot be cheap or quick forgiveness. Forgiveness is enjoined upon us in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim tradition. And forgiveness is necessary, but it too is a process, it is not

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just a single act. The decision to forgive can be a single act, but getting there means having to review the relationships through which we have gone. I mentioned earlier that forgive and forget is a widespread adage that is put forward and I think its principle purpose has been not to continue to carry the resentment and so-on that continues to poison the atmosphere. But I would rather say when we forgive we do not forget but we remember in a different way. And it is learning how to remember in a different way that is key to forgiveness. Forgiveness, as I said, does not rule out punishment. People have to be held accountable for what has happened. Forgiveness begins when we are able to separate the wrongdoer from the deed. In other words, the wrongdoer is more than the deed that has happened, to be able to see that difference. And often what helps us do that is that moral platform out of which we operate.

Some of you may have heard—she speaks a lot in this country—or have read her memoir, Immaculée Ilibagiza, a Rwandan genocide survivor, it’s called *Truth to Tell*, and the basis of the story is she lost her family, all of her family except one brother in the genocide—and she did not lose her brother because he was not in the country at the time, he was in Senegal. But she was hidden, along with three other women, in an internal bathroom, in the house of an evangelical pastor. She was Catholic. For three months they lived in this bathroom, no windows. And she kept herself going by saying the rosary over and over again until one day—there was actually a day she could actually hear the genocidaires outside—it dawned on her, “They are children of God, too.” Now that can be a very abstract proposition, that you hear in sermons and learned in catechism, but it took a depth there and made it possible for her to begin forgiveness.

Now what does forgiveness mean? It means giving up resentment, it means giving up the right to retaliate. It does not mean condoning the deed; it does not mean the wrongdoer should not be punished. But you can treat the wrongdoer with dignity and respect. It may not be deep love for quite a while, if ever, but you can treat them with dignity and respect. And it is these kinds of things that make this possible and this is what’s constituted by this moral platform that we have. Christian faith provides a very deep basis for this because the story of what God has done for the world is a story of reconciliation. God reconciling the world to himself. But the elements are there in the other traditions as well. Islam has strong elements in the Quran of both justice and forgiveness. Pope John Paul II, in his Message for the World Day of Peace, in 2002, said that peace rests upon two pillars: justice and forgiveness. Justice and forgiveness. Justice is creating those right-relationships. Forgiveness is about not letting the past utterly determine the future; it needs to be remembered, but not in a toxic way, not in a way that makes the future nothing more than the past. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who chaired the truth and reconciliation commission in South Africa, his memoir is called *No Future without Forgiveness*, and that in a nutshell I believe says what this is about. Forgiveness is a long path; it is not automatic and it is not instant, but it can happen.

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Let me conclude, by sort of summarizing, if I may, what I think some of the tasks are that lie before us on the way to reconciliation.

First of all, and as I have said, healing the past and building the future are not sequential; first we finish healing the past, then we end by building the future—no—they end up going together. The same is for the tasks of reconciliation; they are not in a sequence, so we are not in a position to say “First we need regime change, political change, then we can start working on economic change, and then social change.” First of all, it does not happen that way, and if you try to do it that way, it can be disastrous. I think this is what happened in Iraq. They had a good plan for how to get rid of Saddam Hussein, but they did not think beyond that, of what would happen next, until real chaos broke out. And that’s why it is so important for what you are doing here, in your efforts to reach out to Cuba, to the people on the island. You don’t build civil society over night; you don’t teach people the work habits that are necessary to build up businesses and sustain them in an instant. It’s all of these ongoing contacts that start to build the networks of trust that will make a different kind of society possible.

So, the future requires multiple strategies, it’s not just one as we move forward in the processes of reconciliation. I think the overriding one as we look from here across to the island is how do we help the Cubans help themselves. One of the things that happened when Canadian and U.S. exiles went back to the Ukraine and Lithuania, there were stories from each of these countries, in both instances there were people who had become quite wealthy and were really committed to helping those countries, well they went back to those countries and started bossing people around saying “you don’t know how to do this,” and it was in Lithuania I believe, within six-weeks, he was asked to leave, it was just so disruptive.

*“Justice is creating those right-relationships. Forgiveness is about not letting the past utterly determine the future; it needs to be remembered, but not in a toxic way, not in a way that makes the future nothing more than the past.”*

*“the tasks of reconciliation; they are not in a sequence, so we are not in a position to say ‘first we need regime change, political change, then we can start working on economic change, and then social change.’ First of all, it does not happen that way, and if you try to do it that way, it can be disastrous.”*

So to help Cubans help themselves, to regain their humanity, too, after living under a totalitarian regime, we are going to hear today from the experiences of elsewhere, and that is really key because there is no secret manual somewhere that teaches you how to do reconciliation processes. It is what we learn from each other, what we are accumulating, that’s important, and the hope is that Cuba—the rebuilding of Cuba—will help in turn in other places as well. But let me just name a few things here that might get us underway.

First is to create safe and hospitable, or welcoming, spaces where people can encounter each other. You know, often the formula you will hear in a case where there has been a totalitarian regime is “nothing can be done until the wrongdoers admit they are wrong and apologize.”

How many countries can you think of where that’s happened? It is pretty hard to come up with much. If it happens at all, you have to create the space where they can do this because they are leaping into the unknown if they try and do something like this. You have to create the space. So where we encounter as human beings, as caring communities,

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that people are people and not rolls in a drama. New networks of connections—you are already doing this—because it is those networks that can create more just and sustainable social fabric.

A key element, too, and again, I know a little about what goes on here, but key is going to be helping the younger generations—on both sides, here, and on the island—get involved in their own ways in building the future. They may not be following our blueprints, but they need our encouragement and support because they're the long-term future.

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*"[A key element] is going to be helping the younger generations—on both sides, here, and on the island—get involved in their own ways in building the future."*

Learning from the successes and mistakes of others that have gone on in different places and seeking, finally, ways of justice that is not revenge, because revenge perpetuates violence but restores right relationships to build a different kind of future. And I think that's what we are here for. A sense that these openings, these doors and windows opening as Carlos Saladrigas said in his opening remarks that they are there and by identifying and using them as opportunities to build a different kind of Cuba. A Cuba that can indeed be home to Cubans everywhere. Thank you.