

**Chaplain's Assembly – Father Philip Murphy SSC**  
**30<sup>th</sup> October 2014**  
**“Reconciliation”**

**Reading: Luke 5:27-32**

*Before I begin my talk, I would like to follow up on my invitation to anyone who is interested in being Baptised. Next week, on Thursday at lunchtime, 12.40pm, there will be a short meeting in the College Chapel on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of the Stewart Building. Coming to the meeting does not mean that you are saying that you definitely will be baptised. At the end of the course which I will run, you will then have the opportunity to say that you would like to go ahead, or you do not wish to go ahead and be baptised.*

Back to today. Our theme this week is reconciliation: Restoring a broken relationship; Dealing with the past and bringing about harmony; Bringing people together. As such, I have a few examples I would like to share.

Coventry is a city in the middle of England. In the city was a Cathedral which was originally built in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. However on the 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1940, during the second world war, it was bombed by the Germans.

There was little that was left of the building, and it seemed impossible to go forward. Not long after the destruction, one of the workers at the Cathedral saw that two of the pieces of wood from the roof had fallen in the shape of a cross.

He placed them on the damaged high altar, and wrote with ash on the wall the words “Father Forgive.” (The words which Jesus had said from the Cross) This cross became a sign of what would happen at Coventry. The decision was made to rebuild the Cathedral. Not to rebuild it in anger, but to rebuild it as a way to show faith, trust and hope.

The new Cathedral was built next door, and Coventry Cathedral today has a very strong ministry of reconciliation. It has been the site for many joint events between the English and German Churches as they have tried to rebuild the relationship between the people of the two countries. As they have tried to be reconciled.

Another example comes from Australia and what is known as the “Stolen Generation” or the “Stolen Children”. These were native Aboriginals who the Government removed from their homes from 1909 until 1970. The children were sent to live in institutions or were adopted to non-Aboriginal families. It was officially done to give them a better education and life, but in reality it didn't. It broke up families and caused a great deal of despair and damage.

In 2008 as an act of reconciliation in Australia, the then Prime Minister gave an apology in the Australian Parliament to say “sorry” to the stolen generation. He apologised on behalf of the Government today and in the past.

One man who knows a great deal about reconciliation is Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa. That nation had lived under the evil arrangement of apartheid: the separation of the races, for 46 years, and the black population suffered extremely under it. After the system was brought down, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up which allowed people to talk about their experiences and attempted to bring reconciliation to the people of the country. Tutu was a member of that Commission during which he heard some appalling stories about how people had been treated. This following clip begins with his speaking about how he dealt with that, and then ends with a short clip in which he speaks of how important forgiveness is.

*A video clip was shown*

Reconciliation is also one of the seven sacraments of the Church, along with Baptism and Confirmation which I have already spoken about. To remind you that a Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. In other words it is something which we can see, giving us God's grace which we cannot see.

In the sacrament of reconciliation, the outward sign is putting into words the things which we have done wrong and which separate us from God, along with the words by the priest giving God's forgiveness. The inward and spiritual grace which we don't see is the forgiveness of sins.

Reconciliation is possible. It is possible

Between nations – such as between the people of Germany and Britain, shown in the work of reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral.

Within nations – such as the example of Australia and the indigenous peoples there. There is still a lot of work to do there, but the process of reconciliation is happening in lots of different ways. And then there is the example of South Africa and the ongoing reconciliation work which has taken place.

Between individuals, between people. Between you or I and any other person we may have had an argument with or a disagreement.

And between man and God, as we too come before God and are honest with him about the ways in which we have distanced ourselves from him and wish to be reconciled.

But reconciliation is not easy. It is hard work and takes trust from everyone involved.

In our own situation in Hong Kong, we look out at such different opinions in society which seem impossible to be reconciled. But in God, reconciliation is never impossible. It takes work, it takes prayer, it takes trust and it takes humility. But if it is possible amongst people in places like South Africa, it is possible anywhere.