

Non-violence and peace-making, lessons from Oscar Romero, Denis Hurley and Pope Francis

Sisters and brothers, good evening to you all. I wish to thank Raymond Perrier, all those involved in planning this evening, and all of you who have come for this annual event....thank you for the privilege of being with you this evening.

I am hoping to share something of my journey with others in the search for a better world based on a commitment to active non-violence and just peacemaking – in the light of three important historical figures: Archbishop Romero, Archbishop Hurley and Pope Francis.

But I take you firstly to a true personal story and experience.

We open our doors to everyone - even though they might come in to kill us.

I heard those powerful words from a soft-spoken Syrian Jesuit with pain-filled eyes during a ceremony in a church in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, on Sunday evening, 8 June, 2014. That evening I was privileged to give the Jesuit Refugee Service Syria the 2014 Pax Christi International Peace Award together with my Pax Christi International Co-President, Mrs. Marie Dennis from the USA. The two Jesuit recipients, accompanied by a member of their Leadership Team from Rome, were Fr. Mourad Abou Seif on the right of Marie Dennis and Fr. Ziad Halil, on her left.

Earlier that day in Sarajevo we had listened to Fr. Mourad and Fr. Ziad describe the terrible suffering in that protracted war, and their work with the Jesuit Refugee Service in Homs and Aleppo where both of them have remained, in spite of the assassination of Fr. Frans van der Lugt, a brother Jesuit priest in Syria in April, 2013. Yes! They did come in and they killed him, but yes! those Jesuit priests have stayed with their people and are witnessing to non-violence and peace together with groups of Muslim and Christian peace activists with whom they work in providing humanitarian relief, education, health-care, and above all hope, which few know about. But, as Fr. Mourad said:

We open our doors to everyone - even though they might come in to kill us. And we will never stop opening our doors. We can only find our safety in God.

And last month Sister Annie Demerjian gave a heartrending account of her ministry in war torn Aleppo when she addressed the Annual Meeting of the organisation Aid to the Church in Need at Westminster Cathedral Hall in London.

Aleppo is a broken city where life hardly exists.... Aleppo has become a city of death.

She concluded by appealing for prayers:

Our world is a gift from God. Part of it is bleeding. Be peacemakers for us and our children.

It is appalling experiences like those in Syria with over 400,000 people killed already – but just one example of wars, atrocities and violence – that has driven Pope Francis to state that we are in the midst of a ‘third world war in installments’. Our whole world – from the international arena, right down to experiences at the local level in many countries in the world, including our own in South Africa – seems to be trapped in a cycle of never-ending violence. We recall the crime statistics for the year till April 2016 released by the Minister of Police on 29 September: among other very worrying statistics on violence, the murder rate had risen to 17805, or 49 homicides per day.

Atrocities and wars, the use of violence to force through whatever one wants to get, the destruction of property, the violation of the human rights of others, the culture of impunity and so on and so on...has this to be accepted as the norm today in our world, and here in South Africa?

Surely there *has to be* another way to deal with divisions and conflict between nations without going to war and killing thousands of innocent children and people?; surely there *is* another way here to seek objectives like a wage increase or to solve issues like municipal demarcations, without resorting to violent protests and destruction of property? There is a great, great need for healing in our land. But even with the analysis of all the reasons why people opt for violence, and the causes behind their anger and despair about change, does that justify violence – and if not, what is to be done about this? Surely at all levels of society and the world we need to promote and consolidate another mindset, another way of thinking based on real values and on a commitment to respectful encounter and dialogue as the first step in conflict resolution... Or does the sheer level of violence throughout the world, and here in South Africa, make one stop and think, and perhaps begin to doubt that there is an innate goodness in humankind which can motivate people to solve problems peacefully instead of through violence?

A few weeks ago, an article appeared in The Tablet about Amos Oz, widely regarded as Israel’s greatest novelist. In an interview he said this:

Jesus Christ is very close to my heart. I love his poetry. I love his wonderful sense of humour. I love his tenderness. I love his compassion. I have always regarded him as one of the greatest Jews who ever lived... But Jesus Christ believes in universal love. He believes that the whole of humankind can live as one happy family. He believes we can quench our internal violence and prejudices and become better human beings. I don't.”

He pauses, carefully choosing the right words to continue with his train of thought:

I defer from his faith in the basic goodness of human nature. It is very hard to believe in this as a child of the twentieth century...

Amos Oz is a person who has doubts about humankind’s essential goodness when he looks at the evil and violence which people are capable of doing.

For me, it is people like Oscar Romero, Denis Hurley, Pope Francis, Mahatma Gandhi - and in my own faith, the person of Jesus - who give me hope that there *is* another way....all of them were or are the very antithesis of the violence that this world and so many seem committed to consign to the children of the future, and indeed to the planet.

In March 2005 I was privileged to participate in a week long reflection in El Salvador to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, killed by a single shot from a sniper. I listened to fascinating theological reflections by great theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez. But we also listened to the witness of the campesinos, the poor peasant farmers and families who suffered horrendous atrocities and massacres at the hands of the notorious Salvadoran National Guard and death squads, whose officers were allegedly trained at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning in Georgia, USA, which gained notoriety and was then renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. I prayed at the altar where Romero fell while celebrating Mass – everything the same except for the inscription on the wall: ‘At this altar Monsignor Oscar A Romero offered his life for his people’. I visited the simple rose garden at the University of Central America where the 6 Jesuits and their housekeeper and her daughter were shot to death by an elite unit of the Guard. And the site where the 3 religious sisters and a lay missionary were raped and murdered by these extremely violent military personnel.

Archbishop Romero, from the perspective of his context, analyzed violence in our world thus:

The Church does not approve or justify bloody revolution and cries of hatred. But neither can it condemn them while it sees no attempt to remove the causes that produce that ailment in our society....”¹....

I will not tire of declaring that if we really want an effective end to violence we must remove the violence that lies at the root of all violence: structural violence, social injustice, exclusion of citizens from the management of the country, repression. All this is what constitutes the primal cause, from which the rest flows naturally”.²

And we could add to his list of examples of structural violence.

In many ways, the Catholic Church in South Africa during the struggle against the structural violence of apartheid tried to tread that difficult and challenging path of Monseñor Romero – being constructively supportive through our solidarity and action with the poor, the suffering and oppressed; actively engaging in the quest for change and for a peace based on justice; and committing to the protection/promotion of human rights and the rights of the people’s movements and organisations on the ground. In a situation that was always so volatile and unpredictable it was not easy for the bishops to maintain a consistent and thought-through prophetic stance. But as the oppression became more brutal especially in the late 1970s and 1980s, the bishops took an increasingly principled stand - their call for justice and change became ever clearer.

We had our prophet in the person of Archbishop Denis Hurley who invited and inspired our Church leadership and people towards more conscious and committed involvement in the struggle for justice, without which there could be no resolution to the impasse. He was one of

¹ Romero, *Homilias*, 12 February, 1978, ‘Romero, The Violence of Love’, pg. 36-37. The Plough Publishing House, Farmington PA.

² Romero, *Homilias*, 23 September, 1979, ‘Romero, The Violence of Love’, pg. 166. The Plough Publishing House, Farmington PA.

many prophetic Church and faith-based leaders who shared in the struggle of the oppressed people, and their leaders and organisations, through protest marches and courageous witness and action on behalf of human rights...all in the quest for change and justice which would open the way to a different future. We all remember that iconic photo of Archbishop Hurley together with other Church and faith leaders walking arm in arm in peaceful protest.

And Archbishop Hurley left us a legacy which has been taken up by the Denis Hurley Centre here in its creative and imaginative responses to the structural violence of the different forms of poverty, marginalisation and exclusion of the 'little ones' in our society....so that a door of hope and new beginnings can open before them through this centre, its ministries and programmes, and all those who support its mission. His legacy also continues in the Denis Hurley Peace Institute which operates from the headquarters of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference. Inspired by the Arch, our Justice and Peace Commission began an outreach to our sisters and brothers in Africa suffering the consequences of violence and war....in 1997 Fr. Sean O'Leary, the Secretary, and I as the Chair of Justice and Peace went to Malawi to meet all the bishops from Sudan to begin an enduring partnership in solidarity with them in the search for an end to the brutal Sudan war, and to work for a just and sustainable peace. I spent over 10 years as chair of the Sudan Ecumenical Forum engaging in international advocacy and meetings with many others involved in the search for peace, all of which finally led to the new country of South Sudan.....and so much hope....which so sadly has been almost completely dashed by renewed violence and fighting since December 2013. It is estimated that since then around 16,000 child soldiers have joined the army or militias. The Denis Hurley Peace Institute has taken on this outreach in mission and solidarity with the Churches, societies and communities in different countries of Africa seeking the ways of solving conflict through non-violence and community mobilisation and action in commitment to peace and justice. We are hosting an international conference at the end of the year bringing together peace activists from all these countries, together with theologians and some partners from Europe and the USA under the auspices of Pax Christi International. Yes: the legacy of the 'Arch'.

Pope Francis, as I indicated earlier, has described the present reality of wars, atrocities and violence all over the world as a 'third world war in installments'. 'We never tire of repeating that the name of God cannot be used to justify violence. Peace alone, and not war, is holy!' the Pope said Sept. 20 at the closing ceremony of an interreligious peace gathering in Assisi.

I am thinking of the families, whose lives have been shattered; of the children who have known only violence in their lives; of the elderly, forced to leave their homeland. All of them have a great thirst for peace. We do not want these tragedies to be forgotten.

Tragedies indeed! What he said then could have been said day after day during the violent bombing to utter destruction of the eastern part of Aleppo in Syria in recent weeks.....and the appalling pictures of little children being dug out of the rubble only to find their entire families had been lost; followed by the rebels regrouping and attacking western Aleppo. All this has been declared by the United Nations Human Rights Commission as 'war crimes' which perhaps should be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Violence

I move now to a sub-theme in my reflection tonight, viz. the articulation in Catholic Church theology of the just war theory, and the proposition of the use of violence as a last resort to overcome atrocities, oppression, and structural injustice, i.e. injustice and violence against an entire people or nation, or groups or classes of people.

In El Salvador, in the face of massacres, assassinations and unspeakable atrocities against the people, there arose a coalition of guerrilla groups called the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) which engaged in an armed struggle against the government in a 12 year civil war from 1979 to 1992 – during which Romero was assassinated in 1980. We have seen something similar to this on several occasions and in different contexts, e.g. the uprising of the people in South Sudan against decades of war and oppression by the Al Bashir Khartoum Regime in the north, and eventually the waging of a liberation war against the north by the Sudan People's Liberation Army and Movement. Just two examples among so many others in the world arena.

Clearly, Romero fiercely condemned all forms of violence and oppression against innocent people. He also affirmed the right of people to oppose a regime which caused untold destruction and suffering to ordinary citizens. In his Fourth Pastoral Letter, he wrote:

The church condemns structural or institutionalized violence, the result of an unjust situation in which the majority of men, women, and children in our country find themselves deprived of the necessities of life (cf. Third Pastoral Letter). The church condemns this violence not only because it is unjust in itself, and the objective expression of personal and collective sin, but also because it is the cause of other innumerable cruelties and more obvious acts of violence”.

The Medellin document on peace, quoting a text from Paul VI's encyclical Populorum Progressio, mentions the legitimacy of insurrection in the very exceptional circumstances of an evident and prolonged tyranny that seriously works against fundamental human rights and seriously damages the common good of the country, whether it proceeds from one person or from clearly unjust structures (cf. Third Pastoral Letter). It immediately goes on, however, to warn of the danger of occasioning, through insurrection, new injustices ... new imbalances ... new disasters --- all of which would justify a condemnation of insurrection (Medellin Documents, Peace, #19).³

I sense from what Romero often said that he was aware of the potential in revolutionary violence and armed struggle to degenerate into the use of violence to achieve power as an end in itself, or that armed struggle and wars could bring about new forms of injustice, violence and destruction – as has happened in El Salvador, a very violent society with multiple mostly gangland murders each day. But I also think it would have pained Archbishop Romero in the depths of his being that people and communities were ‘driven’, as it were, to take an option for violence because of a despair that anything would change in their situation; in other words, he would have been understanding towards them, while always calling on them to choose the way of non-violent peacemaking for the common good.

On November 27, 1977, he said:

³ Romero, Fourth Pastoral Letter, # 70 and # 74.

We have never preached violence, except the violence of love, which left Christ nailed to a cross, the violence that we must each do to ourselves to overcome our selfishness and such cruel inequalities among us. The violence we preach is not the violence of the sword, the violence of hatred. It is the violence of love, of brotherhood, the violence that wills to beat weapons into sickles for work.⁴

Romero was not an absolute pacifist, in the sense of being passive in the face of aggression and not acting in any way in self-defense. This is what he said in his Third Pastoral Letter:

The Church allows violence in legitimate defense, but under the following conditions: (a) that the defense does not exceed the degree of unjust aggression (for example, if one can adequately defend oneself with one's hands, then it is wrong to shoot at an aggressor); (b) that the recourse to proportionate violence takes place only after all peaceful means have been exhausted; and (c) that a violent defense should not bring about a greater evil than that of the aggression --- namely, a greater violence, a greater injustice.

These are criteria used in the just war theory.....but the question is: is this applicable today in the face of the totally disproportionate effects of modern war and extreme violence?

Earlier this year, from 11 – 13 April, a landmark conference took place in Rome, organised by the International Catholic Peace Movement, Pax Christi International, and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Cardinal Peter Turkson opened the conference with a message from Pope Francis. Participants included 9 members of the Pontifical Council, and an international component of 80 theologians, analysts, and peace activists who have been working in situations of war and extreme violence around the world, including from the global south. I participated in this conference, which was remarkable in many respects. In my small discussion group, among others, were Professor Terrence J. Rynne, a professor of Peace Studies at Marquette University in the USA, Merwyn De Mello a Maryknoll lay missionary and peace activist working in Afghanistan, and Mairead Maguire, who received the Nobel Peace Prize for her activism in the cause of non-violence and peacemaking in Northern Ireland. The reflections and writings of Professor Rynne were helpful to me in articulating the approach I am taking in this address.

The theme of the Rome Conference was: ‘Nonviolence and Just Peace: Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Nonviolence’. What emerged during our discussions was a questioning of the just war theory as an accepted teaching in the Catholic Church and a move to a more inclusive challenge and call to proactive peacemaking, i.e. seeking a just peace especially through giving space for the consideration of multiple non-violent methods of peacemaking, as opposed to a continued commitment to wars and violence as a method to achieve objectives. Not all participants were on the same page; there were committed pacifists in the group, a few who still believed in the just war theory in certain circumstances, but a large group who were consciously committed to finding how to respond to wars through active non-violence and peacemaking.

⁴ Romero, *Homilias*, 27 November, 1977, ‘Romero, The Violence of Love’, pg. 12. The Plough Publishing House, Farmington PA.

In recent decades church leadership and faith activists have increasingly realised that the just war theory does not go far enough. Its focus is on war, not peace. The just war theory sets out to distinguish what could be regarded as a justified war from unjustified wars, but the massive, indiscriminate violence and destruction of modern wars call this into question.

As analysts have noted, some key criteria of the theory, namely, proportionality and protection of noncombatants, are never met by modern wars. Civilian deaths in World War I made up roughly 10 percent of all the deaths. In modern wars, such as the internal conflict in Syria or the U.S. invasion of Iraq, civilian deaths now range from 80 percent to 90 percent of all war casualties. By the very criteria of the just war theory, in our era it is difficult to see how there can be such thing as a justified war, and the Conference in Rome made its declaration: “There is no just war” today, it stated, while recognising that we face huge and very difficult challenges in the face of what to do and how to respond when war and massive violence breaks out – and how to stop this, and then begin the process of peacemaking, including striving for justice for the victims. Complex issues, and there are no easy answers, especially given what some world powers are doing. But the Rome Conference wanted to introduce a different type of thinking in the discussion around wars and violence, and to carry this through into advocacy.

Cardinal Turkson, during a recent 40 minute interview at his offices, stated that Pope Francis is giving ‘very strong recognition’ to the conference held at the Vatican last April. He said that the Pope’s decision to focus his message for World Peace Day in 2017 on nonviolent strategies to prevent and stop global violence was partly caused by the discussions at the conference. The Vatican announced in August that Francis’ World Peace Day message for 2017, which will be officially promulgated on the first day of the year, will be given the title ‘Non-Violence: A Style of Politics for Peace.’

Cardinal Turkson said that while just war teachings were first developed to make wars difficult or impossible to justify, they are now used more as conditions that allow violence to be used. ‘

My understanding is that it was initially meant to make it difficult to wage war because you needed to justify it. This now has been interpreted these days as a war is just when it is exercised in self-defense ... or to put off an aggressor or to protect innocent people. In that case, Pope Francis would say: 'You don't stop an aggression by being an aggressor. You don't stop a conflict by inciting another conflict. You don't stop a war by starting another war.' It doesn't stop. We've seen it all around us. Trying to stop the aggressor in Iraq has not stopped war. Trying to stop the aggressor in Libya has not stopped war. It's not stopped the war in any place. We do not stop war by starting another war.

Turkson said the participants at the conference promoted ‘another thinking: ‘Gospel nonviolence’, or ‘nonviolence as Jesus was nonviolent.

So, are there practical alternatives to the cycle of violence, wars, atrocities that characterise our present world? In fact, there is a compelling story of nonviolent action over the 60 years since Gandhi – and not nearly enough of this story I believe has been brought into discussions around modern wars, and possible alternatives both to such wars and all other forms of violence, and indeed the violence being meted out on our planet.

And symbols, gestures are important to keep hope alive in the search for peace. There was that moment when Pope Francis called for his vehicle to stop and he got out and gently lent his head in prayer against the wall dividing Palestinian from Israeli.....well that gesture would have spoken more than thousands of words to the Palestinians about his active and caring solidarity with their suffering. But, later on the same visit, he was inclusive of those in Israel who had suffered in the Holocaust, and this was followed by his call to Presidents Abbas and Peres to come to Rome to meet each other as fellow human beings, to pray together for peace, the symbol of which was planting an olive tree. A small step....but the search must go on.....

And about 5 weeks ago a small group of Israeli women began a march to Jerusalem from northern Israel to demand that the Israeli government restart a peace process with the Palestinians. After they reached the Palestinian city of Jericho on the West Bank, the core group of 20 women was joined by more than 3000 others, including around 1000 Palestinian women. And, even though the Palestinian women could not proceed beyond the barrier that separates the West Bank from Israel, the Israeli women headed for the Prime Minister's residence where they held an emotional rally. The Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee, a 2011 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, addressed the group: 'I say to my sisters in Israel, that this is your time to stand up and say no to war and yes to peace. When you stand firm for what you believe, the men with guns are afraid of you.'

Those women witnessed to the call that peace has to be *built* from *within* the affected communities everywhere, and peacemaking strategies must, therefore, be varied and adapted to each situation – including here in South Africa.

But because the agenda for peacemakers is clearly so complex and challenging, a vision – and indeed *an inner strength of spirit* is needed to inspire and match the scope of that agenda. For Christians, that vision can be discovered in the New Testament, particularly through what Jesus proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right; blessed are the gentle, the merciful; blessed are those persecuted in the cause of right' - and so on.

Reflecting on the cultural, economic, political and religious context of Jesus' time, it seems clear that Jesus' life was one of non-violent resistance to the structural evil in his situation. He invited everyone, especially the excluded, into an inclusive community; he struggled to relieve the suffering of his people, both their physical suffering as a healer but also the grinding suffering from an unjust political system that was breaking the spirit of the people...but he stood against the growing violence that was emerging in response to this.

He stood up to and engaged the 'powers' of his time...but he also wept over the city of Jerusalem because he understood the great anger and violence in the people that was building up. He could foresee that, unless the people took a different direction that anger would play out in a violent revolt against Rome...and that would lead to their destruction, as it did.

He taught, therefore, an alternative way to respond to the 'enemy', the way of nonviolence. 'Love your enemies. Do good to those who persecute you.' Utopian? Maybe...but his teaching reflected his life...and calls someone like myself to think in other terms about how to respond to war and violence. Archbishop Romero commented:

The gospel's advice to turn the other cheek to an unjust aggressor, far from being passivity and cowardice, is evidence of great moral strength that can leave an aggressor morally defeated and humiliated. 'The Christian can fight, but prefers peace to war', was what Medellin said about this moral force of nonviolence (Medellin Documents, Peace, #15).

This is all about a choice, a decision every person, group and organisation can make...what Romero, Hurley, Pope Francis chose to do...and what others of different faiths, like Mahatma Gandhi, and others who ascribe to no faith at all have done and continue to do. The choice, the decision is to be peacemakers who work to relieve peoples' suffering, try to change the economic and political structures that bring so much suffering to the vulnerable, and remove or transform the underlying causes of violence, conflict and war so that there can be sustainable peace and economic justice, especially for the excluded and the victims of conflict – but, to do all this without any form of violence. It is a choice, a decision people and groups, and organisations can make – or not make; and then the question is: what is to be done when the rule of law and the human rights of others are violated? The challenge, therefore, is how to introduce the power of nonviolent responses to nations and communities, groups and individuals both to, if possible, prevent wars and violence breaking out, or to limit the effects of war and violence when they occur, and to bring healing, hope and new beginnings after wars and violence have ended.

Nonviolent action

What supports the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is the record or stories of nonviolent action campaigns.

Increasingly, research is validating the superiority of nonviolence over violence in terms of *effectiveness*. Erica Chenoweth, a professor at the University of Denver, together with Dr. Maria J. Stephan wrote a book in 2011: *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic of Nonviolent Conflict* in which they examined 323 violent and nonviolent campaigns from 1900 – 2006. They demonstrated that nonviolent resistance campaigns succeeded, in terms of stated political

objectives about 54% of the time, compared to 27% for violent campaigns. In addition, the research showed that nonviolent campaigns are associated with both democratic and peaceful societies. Why? Because of the inclusion and participation of communities and people.

We have witnessed the achievements, against all odds, of nonviolent campaigns across the globe, for example, in the Philippines during which 2 million people peacefully toppled the Marcos regime. And we are now beginning to hear the witness of people from all over the world, especially from the global South as it is termed, who are promoting the power of coordinated nonviolent action in multiple small settings to achieve what are significant results.

For example, civilians trained in nonviolent tactics can and do effectively protect others in conflict zones around the globe. To date, 12 international nongovernmental organisations provide unarmed civilian protection in 17 countries, even though this is by no means easy.

Two major United Nations reviews and a report from countries that supply UN troops for Peacekeeping Operations have cited and recommended unarmed civilian protection (UCP) as practiced by an NGO called Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP).

Unarmed civilian protection (UCP) is an emerging methodology for the direct protection of civilians, for localised violence reduction and for supporting local peace infrastructures. UCP provides unarmed, specially trained civilians, recruited from many countries and cultures to live and work with local civil society in areas of violent conflict. It has grown in practice and recognition in the last few decades, with over 50 civil society organisations applying UCP methods in 35 conflict areas since 1991, but only after developing close collaboration with local civil societies and after a comprehensive analysis, and the practicing of the principle of “Do No Harm”.

UCP can be applied at all stages of a conflict, but it can be particularly effective at an early stage, to prevent or mitigate violent conflict, and also after violent conflict has subsided, to support the transition to a more healthy civil society.

An example. In mid-2014, women living in the Bentiu Protection of Civilians area in South Sudan alerted the Nonviolent Peaceforce team living there, that women were being raped and sometimes ganged-raped by soldiers when they went out to gather firewood and water. The women reported that sometimes the soldiers would describe the assaults as part of their job. Often older women took on these chores to protect the younger ones, and decrease the likelihood of attack. Women had to choose between their personal safety and providing for their families’ basic needs.

NP began accompanying the women when they left the camp, sending 2 or more trained civilian protectors along with them. In the year after this accompaniment had been offered no woman was attacked when accompanied. Instead, the soldiers looked the other way. In the past year NP has provided over 1,000 accompaniments for vulnerable people, primarily women and children, throughout South Sudan. Just one example among many to illustrate that another mindset, another way of thinking about war and violence, holds promise and is worth pursuing.

I conclude.....We know that our planet is in crisis. More people flee their homes and are displaced for longer periods because of violent conflict, than at any other time since World War II. Yet, futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard reminds us that when systems become highly disorganised innovations increase, so it is no coincidence that more peacebuilders, nonviolent resisters, conflict transformers and unarmed civilian protectors are at work on the planet than ever before. Together they are striving to re-form history.

And, as I said, this vision and programme of active non-violence and just peacemaking must be brought to the heart of every society and community; it is a challenge which we need to take up in South Africa, to develop a different way of thinking, a different mindset at the heart of every community and organisation and group about violence in all its forms.....that this not the way to solve any problem or any conflict. On the contrary.

Professor Terrence Rynne gave an insightful reflection on what comprises a peaceful society - anywhere. A society is peaceful only when it has *all* of the following, he said:

- The rule of law;
- Its people enjoy the full range of human rights;
- The economy is just;
- The people are enabled to grow to their full potential;
- They live in harmony with one another;
- They have the skills to solve conflicts without violence.

I would add to the last: to have the skills and *commitment* to solve conflicts without violence. In the quest for a peaceful society here, and a peaceful world and planet.....the task and the challenge for all people of good will is indeed immense. Thank you.

Bishop Kevin Dowling C.Ss.R.