

Reconciliation – a subject for high-mindedness

By Olivia Wernli *

Conflicts have existed since time immemorial. These were ironed out and solved either by violent or peaceful means. The key to lasting peace is the readiness and the willingness to reconcile.

Ausserschwyz – The United Nations (UN) is the only genuine global institution that promotes peace. One of its main tasks is “to preserve world peace and international security” (UN charter, Art.1, Nr.1). According to the UN Proclamation declaring 2009 as “International Year of Reconciliation”, the future generations should be protected from the scourge of war by fostering peace, a peaceful life of togetherness and good neighbourliness, so that friendly relations between men and nations will be enhanced, and international co-operation in every sector can be encouraged.

Governments, international religious or non-religious institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGO) are invited to support reconciliation processes by supporting cultural, educational and social activities or projects under the “Motto: Unity in Diversity.” The purpose is to spread as much information as possible on the subject of “reconciliation” by means of conferences or seminars.

For example, Foundation for Subjective Experience and Research (S.E.R.), an NGO with consultative status by the UN ECOSOC, has worked out a plan of action for the International Year of Reconciliation, which has met with strong support. The object is to hold monthly meetings and competitions, which take “reconciliation” as their theme, i. e. Writing competitions, musical performances, documentary films, sport and development.

As the peace negotiations of the former UN General Secretary, Kofi Annan, in Kenya have shown, reconciliation is an urgent matter. There was an acute danger of civil war in Kenya for more than two months. Mr. Annan invited the parties to resume talks in order to find new solutions with which a first step towards a process of reconciliation would be undertaken.

How can one be reconciled?

One condition for reconciliation is that people in the region concerned develop their own initiative. They must want to forgive and be reconciled with each other, so that there is a good chance for a fresh start in a more peaceful atmosphere. All people are equal and want to be respected, even though they don't always share the same opinions – their views should be accorded respect and recognition. There is no handbook on how to forgive and be reconciled. But with reconciliation comes a healing “miracle” which, more often than not, is based on personal commitment that keeps the “door of hope“ open. Apart from that, Reconciliation as a Vision, is simply a “matter of the heart” expressing itself in the conduct of human affairs.

The fourth International Reconciliation Week, initiated by the S.E.R. Foundation Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands, took place at the end of April 2008. The Reconciliation Week offers an opportunity to take part in projects under “Unity in

Diversity”, or self-organized activities which the participants themselves conceived. For example, a birthday party, a dance, a debate, etc. Relevant information can be found at: www.ser-foundation.ch as well as at: www.global-balance.org

*Because of her work for the “Matura” examination, Olivia Wernli, a pupil at the Kantonal School, Ausserschwyz, Switzerland, is engaged with the topic “Reconciliation”. She introduces this in a series of articles with the help of interviews, analyses and literature, and, through this, wishes to spread the idea of reconciliation.

Caption under picture.

By “reconciliation“ is meant building the fundamental basis upon which individual lives will unfold, expanding into the social level and into national sphere.

Year of Reconciliation 2009

The United Nations General Assembly, under the leadership of the former General Secretary, Kofi Annan, declared the year 2009 as “International Year of Reconciliation” on 20 November 2006. Although this will only take place next year, “reconciliation” is an omnipresent, always topical and necessary subject, which has an unequivocal goal: Peace.

Reconciliation processes should be encouraged and developed in all concerned countries and regions of the world, but must find solace in the consciousness of every individual person.

Published in

Höfner Volksblatt, Friday April 11th 2008 / No. 69 / p. 11
(Independent Newspaper for the Höfe / weekend edition / 8832 Wollerau, Switzerland)

Translation by Sylvia Jakob, May 2008