RECONCILIATION

A Four-Part Webinar Series on the Mission and Ministry of Reconciliation

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Reconciliation: Part 2
Reconciliation—The Path of Encounter

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Introductions

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Reconciliation in the present moment of history: our understanding is rooted in relationship. Encounter is a way of expressing this relationship. *Encounter is a dimension of reconciliation.*
The meaning of relationship emerges in the following ways:

(1) the continual interaction of God’s Love with creation

(2) we ponder these realities alongside the growing recognition that God’s work in creation continues to unfold before us.
3) The foundation for a theology that takes evolution seriously is found in a trinitarian vision of God as a God of mutual relations, a God who is communion in love, a God who is friendship beyond all comprehension.
4) A sharp awareness of the global leads us beyond boundaries to a growing consciousness about human suffering.
5) The terrible suffering we encounter in the world today, including the excruciating experiences of migration, natural disasters, hunger, illness and death.
These new insights develop from the Second Vatican Council and the thinking of John XXIII, who broke with a mentality and practice shaped by both the juridical-social-customary engagements of the Constantinian era and the apologetic doctrinal postures associated with the Counter-Reformation.
Pope John XXIII spoke of a new moment in history leading to a new order of human relations.
Some of the new orientations emerging since Vatican II and fundamentally shifting relationships and attitudes:

- Luke 4:16-30 served as a powerful inspiration for many missionaries
- Use of terms of reciprocity: partnership, cooperation, collaboration
- Use of terms of humility in words like *pilgrim* and *servant*
- Use of words of interiority such as charism, conscience, joy and hope, grief and anguish
Some of the principal ideas woven through Vatican II Documents: Kind of language used

- From harsh condemnations and penalties from former councils to horizontal language: *Brothers and Sisters, people of God, the priesthood of all believers, and collegiality.*
God’s Relationship with Us

JESUS ENCOUNTERS THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

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Woman of Samaria

- Shunned . . . By herself at noon
- Isolated and wanting isolation . . . “How can you, a Jew, talk to me?”
- In a seemingly unresolvable situation
- Is freed by facing herself
- Is freed to witness after facing herself
Woman of Samaria

Notice how the encounter is mutual: as Jesus opens to the Woman, she is able to open herself to him.

As an encounter, the process is open-ended: the steps are not defined.

How do we think that the story went after Jesus left the village?
Ambiguity-Openness

The Samaritan Woman is encountered as she is. We don’t know the rest of the story, and we don’t know how things have been resolved in her life, whether she stayed with the man she was currently living with. Jesus accepts her as she is and encounters her at the moment of her vulnerability.

- Why is she the way she is?
- Who is she living with now?
- What is she actually able to do?
- Who she really represents?

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An Image of Mission

• She represents the Church’s initial outreach to the Samaritans.
• She shows the Church’s initial outreach to the Gentiles.

Experience is what shapes the pastoral reality. Encounter is the start of all mission.
Encounter-Share

After encountering Jesus and seeing herself in a different way because of her meeting with him, she is then able to share her experience and invite others to encounter Jesus themselves.
Our Encounter

• What does Samaritan woman say about our encounter with God?

• How is encounter the beginning of reconciliation?

• How do I see God’s encounter in my own life?
Encounter-Mercy

• We encounter God through Jesus and the Spirit.
• Jesus shows us the inner heart and mercy of God.
• We encounter each other in our similarities and our differences.
  • Similarities can seem inviting.
  • Differences can seem threatening . . . .
• Estrangement is the failure of encounter . . .
  • Violence, exploitation, abuse, destruction
  • Encounter fails when we refuse to encounter but stay in ourselves
• Reconciliation: the restoration of encounter
Reconciliation and Encounter

• We experience reconciliation when we can once again encounter the other as other, our neighbor as neighbor, our perceived enemy as friend, our world as our common home.

• Jesus gives us both a model and a means of reconciliation by showing us the Father’s Mercy and giving us his Spirit of Love.
• In Jesus we encounter God and God’s relationship to us and our world;
• This encounter, with its openness and transformational power, is the context in which we are Church and reach out as Church to the world.
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Invest in reconciliation

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