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LOOSING THE CORDS WHICH BIND: FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

by

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In this year of the Great Jubilee, which begins on Christmas Eve and extends to Epiphany of the year 2001, the themes of reconciliation, repentance, and forgiveness have appeared insistently in every utterance of John Paul II as he invites us together with the whole church to cross the threshold of the new millennium by entering through the doors of jubilee with jubilation in our hearts.

To pass through that door means to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; it is to strengthen faith in him in order to live the new life which he has given us. It is a decision which presumes freedom to choose and also the courage to leave something behind in the knowledge that what is gained is divine life. It is in this spirit that the pope will be the first to pass through the holy door on the night between December 24 and 25, 1999. Crossing its threshold, he will show to the church and to the world the holy Gospel, the wellspring of life and hope for the coming third millennium. Through the holy door, symbolically more spacious at the end of a millennium, Christ will lead us more deeply into the church, his body and his bride.¹

What brings us to jubilation and what makes the liminal entry "wider" and more spacious as the church makes this perilous passage into the future? In *Tertio Millennio* John Paul II declares them wider on the basis of his personal campaign to purify the church through a clear awareness of and accounting for the last ten centuries of sin. These historical sins he named as schism and disunity among Christians, intolerance and the use of violence in the service of truth, and a series of present evils from religious indifference, erroneous theological views, and among many others, the whole litany of social and economic injustices which have consistently appeared in

our social justice teachings. In the name of the church, he has also admitted any number of historical instances of sinfulness recognizing the centuries of anti-Semitism spawned by the violence of Christian hatred and scape-goating, rehabilitated Galileo, and attempted to heal tragic ethnic wounds throughout Central Europe and many, many other parts of the world.

This attempt to widen the doors and engage in a process of repentance and forgiveness has been met with mixed feelings on the part of some. Does it really take four or ten centuries for an institution which claims to be "a light to the peoples" to acknowledge sinfulness and seek forgiveness? Those who experience a mixture of feelings despite the good intentions and rehabilitation of wronged individuals and the symbolic remembering and righting of historical injustice, still discover mixed feelings which surface in response to these gestures—often expressed by those in the victimized groups. How might these historical survivors of an effective history of social sin participate in a process of reconciliation and forgiveness once an apology or recognition of sinfulness or complicity in sinfulness was acknowledged? Further, this acknowledgement of corporate sinfulness does not address the present needs for reconciliation within the contemporary church itself.

For example, the following dream reported by a highly committed religious woman expresses the deep ambiguity experienced by many others today. She says: I was with a mixture of community members and others. There were some bishops meeting with us as well. When it came time for Eucharist, all thirty or so bishops vested, miters and all, and proceeded with Eucharist in the mother house chapel. They formed themselves in the first

rows of the choir relegating everyone else who came to back rows or worse. Most of us declined attending. But when I peeked in the door, an older woman responded to the bishops' questions "Where are all the others?" with trenchant remarks about being rendered mute without the ability to participate fully in the service because the bishops took all the parts. The bishops were speechless.

As the dream conveys so powerfully there is much subtle and usually covert injustice and oppression experienced by many in the church itself today coded by the words, racism, and in this instance, sexism, even within the context of Eucharist, the place where reconciliation and division is symbolically overcome. The symbols of the dream are illuminating. Some women choose to absent themselves from the very Eucharist in which they also wish to participate. The dreamer absents herself, not from the dialogue or conversation, the meeting, but from the service, yet actively "opens the door" to some unexpected possibility. The bishops are simply being themselves and following their ordinary style of worship without any real awareness of what they are doing to the religious women whose sacred space they have usurped. In that motherhouse chapel, women usually participate fully in their own Eucharistic celebrations. Their choice to not attend this one seemed to be the least offensive way they could both speak and protect themselves. Yet still there is engagement. The dreamer is at the door, to see what it looks like, perhaps wondering if anything new might happen. The bishops experience a moment of awareness. "Where are all the others?" Their voiced question, their spontaneous wondering and willingness to listen to an answer from outside their perspective creates the space for revelation and insight. It is an older lay woman, not the religious, who is free to speak truth to power, to speak the reality. This direct speech is most likely shocking to the dreamer.

Without the question, the willingness to listen, and, I would hope, the two forms of speech—the non-attending of the service by many of the religious women and the direct speech of the elder woman who attends can then result in conversation and mutual dialogue. The beginning of a process of healing and reconciliation might be in bud.

It seems to me that many religious women, certainly not all, no longer feel uncritically and comfortable at home in the church to which they have given their lives in love and service. Many are struggling with their disillusionment, anger, grief, and depression as poignantly in relationship to their treatment in and by the clerical system as they do in relationship to the failure of other social institutions to undergo the depth of transformative change and conversion. To see signs of such change would cause such joy to rise so spontaneously that no one could suppress their jubilant songs of gratitude and praise. For many crossing the threshold of the third millennium is characterized more by lamentation than jubilation. I would like to explore some of the reasons for these themes and invite us to consider how we might engage more effectively in the process of forgiveness and reconciliation so that we might again together sing songs of praise and joy in response to the saving presence and action of Jesus within the ecclesial community and the world. This internal process of reconciliation and healing would then enhance our credibility as ministers of reconciliation to our violence-torn world.

You as Vicars for Religious as well as leaders of religious communities are perhaps only too clearly aware of the worst cases of abuses of power everywhere in the church system, including within the religious congregations themselves. I do not want to suggest that reconciliation is needed only between religious and the clerical institution. Many communities themselves have only replicated a different version of the same kinds

of social sinfulness already experienced in current church order. And I believe you may be in a position in many instances to be ministers of reconciliation within the ecclesial community—depending on you, the ordinary you serve, and the religious women and men who continue to love and serve the church despite the pain and suffering involved in that commitment.

As I tried to reflect on this topic beyond earlier workshops and retreats I have given to women about our increasingly painful relationship to the church, I have continued to discover more of the psychological and theological features of the growing feelings of alienation. Full-time professional ministers, both lay and religious, are deeply committed to the Gospel, often to social justice aspects of church teaching and praxis, and are confused, disconcerted and pained by their feelings of exclusion, vulnerability, and alienation. Many try to separate their relationship with Jesus, their commitment to the Gospel, and their membership in their religious communities from the “Institutional Church” which is frequently the most likely place where they will experience injustice in their personal lives. The inability of the clerical system to separate ordination and the sacramental system from jurisdiction, administration, pastoral care and decision-making, creates systemic injustice which operates in a closed and secret manner, often in covertly violent ways. The clerical system controls its own members by these same processes but affects those outside the system differently.

A recent experience on a directed retreat at a center run by a male religious community became something of a parable of this complex reality. Our team of directors, three religious men, not all from the hosting house, one professional lay woman, and four religious women, again not all from the same religious community formed the team. The team was collegial in its origination and in its

relationships with one another. We had begun as a team of four and added directors each year. We shared a fine experience of collaboration and team ministry at the service of our retreatants. Most of these were full-time ministers, mostly women serving the local church in various ways. They commented annually in their evaluations about the obvious cohesion of the team and our ability to work together in mutuality and creativity and the healing hospitality they experienced from the sponsoring religious community.

The hosting retreat house has been under renovation and structural development on a continuous basis over the last several years. Each year as we returned for the retreat, new areas had been developed and others changed or discarded. This year, a very beautiful convent on the grounds which had fallen into disrepair had been bull-dozed to rubble at the rector’s decision without consultation with his retreat staff. Some members of the staff had dreams about ways the building could have been resorted to serve important aspects of the retreat ministry—a place for teens, a place for silent retreats, etc. The stone-work in the building was exquisite and retreatants had imagined other ways that this women’s space might have been restored as a place where women might gather in a space proportioned to them and aesthetically reflecting their dreams. Many had prayed at these ruins which had become a powerful image for the life-cycle of their communities, undergoing so much renovation and structural change. Like Francis at San Damiano they dreamed of rebuilding this churchly home. Sitting on those stones, walking around in the shell of the building, they dreamed a future for themselves and for other women in the church. When they returned this year, one after another happened on the bulldozed building, and sat among the ruins. And they wept and raged. It accumulated meaning as a symbol of their experience in the church. Its destruction stood

for masculine authority destroying female space and with it their dreams for the future without even having a clue that this decision affected anyone beyond themselves and the potential liability of the community should anyone injure themselves in the still standing ruin. The rector's decision from his perspective was responsible, pragmatic, and paternalistic, but neither imaginative nor future-oriented. The retreatants in the contemplative silence of their restorative retreat found that their on-going conflictual relationship with the church had become an unexpected visitor. Once again they found themselves both nourished by the pastoral care of the collegial team of retreat directors, fed by the Eucharistic and Reconciliation liturgies and left mute, absolutely voice-less and helpless in response to decision-making that was symbolically destructive of their very selves—a system of non-consultative, authoritarian decision-making which had destroyed one more female space and set of dreams within the church without even knowing it—without even knowing it.

You as vicars know even more serious instances of the two streams of dedicated life in the church “missing” one another. Bishops and clergy make decisions which intimately affect the institutions and ministries of religious without consultation or collaborative planning. Religious are evicted from church owned housing, dismissed from ministry positions without due process, and routinely reported to authorities without inclusion in on-going dialogue, planning, or even knowledge of the accusations or who their accusers in any of these situations might be. It would seem that from the perspective of each of the decision-makers in these situations, their decisions are justified-unfortunate perhaps, but somehow necessary. A single clerical appointment can destroy in a few months or a couple of years the communities, lay empowerment, and pastoral projects created and nurtured for

years by the non-ordained, religious pastoral minister. Among the non-ordained in the American church, there is currently little expectation that processes for adjudicating conflicts or discriminatory practices either exist or will have any affect on the decisions made prior to invoking an appeal except in the most blatant cases of sexual misconduct. For women religious and lay ministers, the difference between expectations about non-discriminatory employment practices and the ability to seek redress through grievance procedures or litigation in business, the professions, and other settings and their experience in the church is remarkable.

Finally, quite apart from these long-standing historical and structural aspects of the church which can also function in quite benevolent and fruitful ways when generous and gifted leaders relate to their constituencies in collegial, open and actively collaborative ways, there has emerged within the church a plethora of angry, even violent voices attacking in every way possible those with whom they disagree. The rhetoric of violence is increasing and according to Archbishop Pilla, this behavior is incompatible with “the ministry of reconciliation with which the church has been entrusted.”²

These kinds of situations are leading to trends tracked for several years by LCWR of religious leaving church employment altogether. In my experience of helping religious re-frame their experience theologically and psychologically, the greatest distress is experienced by women in parish or diocesan positions. They are burning out despite their courage and love for the church unless they have a positive personal relationship with their pastor or bishop. Truly this is a church in need of reconciling in this time of a Jubilee, a time for restoring right-relationships, releasing those bound, forgiving debt, restoring harmony, loosing the cords that bind.

In the context of a church community which both needs and desires reconciliation and forgiveness, how might we understand the dynamics which lead to reparation, restoration of relationship, and mutual forgiveness?

When we add the theme of reconciliation to that of forgiveness, we are clearly acknowledging that more than one party is involved and that the process entails more than the God-human dynamic. The process differs depending on whether one is the aggrieved party or the offending one regardless of whether or not the offending behavior was legal and justified within the system. When offending behavior is sanctioned by group norms or by a system which perpetrates abuse of power and covert violence, the offenders do not feel they have done anything wrong and so neither need to apologize, acknowledge wrong-doing nor make reparation to the injured parties.

This is, I believe, the situation we face within the ecclesial community today. The aggrieved, those who are dehumanized because they have no voice nor legitimate ways of participating in the decision-making which affects them, find themselves in a psychological and spiritual condition of contained anger, sadness, and real suffering. Sometimes these feelings generated by the experience of powerlessness and frustration of agency result in guilt and shame because these women and men do not want to feel this way on a permanent basis. They find it difficult to recognize their very love for and engagement with the church and its saving, compassionate mission is also the source of their anger and grief—their pain that things are not as they might or should be, a constant registering of resistance to affront.

~~The offenders both the individual and collective ones, either male or female, are only doing their jobs, and like the rector have little awareness of their effect of their decisions. If the offenders are also personally aloof, cold,~~

hostile, controlling, or vindictive they intensify the negative effects of the system and of their behavior toward those offended. This occurs either through conscious misconduct or willful abuse of power, or through a need to control or punish those who openly disagree with them. But the deeper need for reconciliation requires liberation, changing the system so that it no longer supports or ignores the offensive behavior of individual persons or of itself.

Thus, reconciliation is a structural situation as well as a personal one. Forgiveness and reconciliation in the interpersonal and communal realms require more than an exhortation. They require a situation of real relationship in which the community is free to speak its truth without fear of reprisal. Despite real and legitimate differences in theologies and interpretations of reform and renewal within the church, real relationships of mutuality and love above all are the basis for working through differences, not tactics of shaming, shunning, silencing, blaming or ostracizing. Many, many differences are just that — differences, neither right nor wrong, not even ideologically correct or incorrect. When parties who appear to differ have no on-going, regular, personal relationship, dialogue, or faith-sharing, it becomes increasingly impossible to find the common ground of love of God, love for the church, and mutual respect on which to stand to resolve the conflict. Confrontation and conflict resolution require support as well as challenge, positive regard as well as criticism. Frequently, what appears to be disagreement becomes interpreted as disobedience rather than more simply as misunderstanding. Someone else reports a distorted version of the events to someone else who knows none of the parties involved, neither their histories, nor their dedication, nor their credibility. Actions are judged apart from dispositions and espoused theologies. Situations escalate into further injury and misunderstanding when there

is no real relationship upon which to build. This basis in relationship is the pre-condition which enables working through differences so that both are influenced in some way in the process. One of the problems in our post-Vatican II church is that we as an ecclesial community as a whole have not created the new structures and processes of dialogue which could form the basis for the ecclesiology imagined in the documents. The teaching church does not yet know how to listen. The governing church does not know how to critique or modify its use of power which results in domination rather than the intended service of community and charity. This it can do by being willing to listen without defensiveness to those who are the victims and survivors in the system. It cannot do this by only listening to other office-holders in the system and the angry accusatory voices of the fearful who sow division instead of peace.

As I was preparing these remarks I was poignantly moved by three major sources: learnings from processes of reconciliation in parts of the world where the victims of torture and various forms of state-violence try to resume their lives again, Gil Bailie's perceptive analysis of violence, and the necessity of forgiveness from the aggrieved to heal both the victims and the perpetrators of violence. And the slow and difficult process implied by this.

Such reconciliation and forgiveness is never purely a personal or individual process although the effects of systemic sin become personal problems for those upon whom the worst effects fall. As a church community, I think our blindness to the way covert violence works its way through the church system, including religious communities and their institutions, makes the task of reconciliation and forgiveness so difficult. We are all aggrieved and offenders in some dimension. We are often too willing to sacrifice someone else for the un-faced collective sins of the community. I think it is this covert sinful

process, rooted in fear and distrust, that fuels hatred and justifies injustice. I think it is our collective need for punishing someone, anyone other than ourselves so we can feel blameless that makes the simple interpersonal process of forgiveness difficult and the collective process of authentic conversion even more elusive.

Gil Bailie develops these themes related to Jewish-Christian history in quite powerful ways in *Violence Unveiled*.³ He convincingly argues that some form of sacrificial violence is at the core of the social containment of violence. The Biblical God directs a process which both unveils the dynamics of violence at the heart of history and gradually seeks to overcome it, first through the process of sacrificial substitution — the ram in the bushes instead of Isaac, the goat driven into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement, etc., until in Jesus, even these lesser forms of sacrificial violence are eliminated altogether through compassionate relationships, mutual forgiveness, and reconciliation in the community. According to Bailie, Jesus' violent death is meant to unveil all other forms of violence so that there remains through the Pascal mystery no justification for the resort to violence of any kind. Jesus' death and resurrection refuses to confer legitimacy on any form of violence rooted in the primitive sacred. This is done through the voice and the truth of the innocent victim, Jesus who breaks through the veil of violence.

Because some form of this social violence is always available, I think it makes individual sinfulness and its forgiving somewhat difficult but not impossible. This is especially so when Christianity has often inverted the very symbol of the crucified as a justification for encouraging the suffering and death of others—as if God wants more sacred violence often in the form of punishment instead of completely transforming it. We fail to recognize the violence we do to ourselves spiritually by failing to recognize not only our

feelings of resentment, rivalry and envy of others whom we then feel justified in excluding or rejecting or attacking but also our inability and unwillingness to allow our most God-like possibilities to come to fruition in us. This is the personal part of the equation. This is the mystery of forgiveness and reconciliation we encounter when we experience throughout the symbol of the crucified the inexhaustible grace of forgiveness and transformation which restores us. It is more frequently the collective and even more unconscious form of this violence, susceptible to subtle forms of irruption and displacement in the community which we often fail to recognize. As Bailie so powerfully shows, we are more like that which we fear or hate than we are willing to admit. The remedy for another's individual or group violence against us, should we be the other, is likely to justify our simple limitation of similar violence. Violence begets violence without the intervention of grace in both the interpersonal and social realms.

Compared to the collective form the interpersonal process of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation is relatively easy. Let's look at the steps of the process of forgiveness first. First of all our Biblical tradition teaches us that God stands toward us in a posture of absolute forgiveness. When God forgives us, God forgets, which is the root meaning of amnesty. Though our sins be red as scarlet, I shall make them white as snow. God redeems, restores, makes whole, and forgets sin when the sinner repents. And this is what God wants. God does not leave us in our sin. Too often we choose to stay in our sin.⁴

The ministry of Jesus primarily dealt with restoring sinners and outcasts to full personhood. He attempted to repair the social consequences of structural sin which required a permanent core of sinners who could not ever be restored to the community. If an individual or group is so restored then the full realization of this gift will result as a natural

consequence in forgiving others, in not holding others bound by our judgment. So forgiveness entails both being forgiven and forgiving. Receiving forgiveness empowers forgiveness of others.

From the side of forgiving another, it is often a different story. Because we frequently find it hard to forgive someone who has offended or harmed us, we assume that God finds it difficult, too. Sebastian Moore suggests that the dynamics of human-human forgiveness do not completely parallel the God-human dynamics of forgiveness. He says that when I forgive another person, I have to soften and release my heart. My heart must expand in compassion in order to forgive the other; I have to relent, forget, lay down my grievance when another asks for my forgiveness.⁵ Individually, we know how difficult that can be. If I have had to thicken and harden my heart in order to stop feeling the pain of the hurt, it is no small thing to release that armor. Yet I know, that if I hold on to my righteousness, my aggrieved and justifiable sense of having been exploited, harmed, wounded, I will find it hard to both trust and love again. I both harm myself as well as protect myself if I don't learn how to forgive. If I don't move toward forgiveness, I give the other who has harmed me the power to determine my life. Forgiveness restores me. Ultimately, forgiveness offered to another over a serious matter is purely an act of grace. Within the Christian dispensation it is God who forgives in us; God who empowers the forgiveness. From God's side, God does not have to release God's heart. God's heart is already open in compassionate love; it is we who have to release our hardness of heart in order to receive this abundance.

Many of you are probably familiar with Corrie Ten Boom's description of her encounter with the SS guard of the shower room in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He came forward and thanked her for her

message of forgiveness:

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile. I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness.

As I took his hand a most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself.⁶

This profoundly God-empowered grace of forgiveness only becomes possible from a compassionate stance toward oneself. I can only forgive another from the heart when I have come to love and accept myself in both my sinfulness and graciousness. I can really only forgive another when I have come to accept my own limitations, failures, and even need for others. I discover I, too, am part of the human community and no longer place any other person beyond the pale of human community. We are always more alike in some ways than we are different.

At the same time, interpersonal forgiveness is unique to each situation and relationship. "It is affected" as Kathleen Fisher says, "by every aspect of the relationship: the strength of the bond, the history of trust, the admission of guilt by the person who has wronged us."⁷

Because these factors are different in every circumstance, we may need to return again and again to some aspect of the process of forgiveness. We may understand the meaning of an injury differently at different times in our lives. New understandings initiate the process of forgiveness in relationship to them. Forgiveness does not imply overlooking offenses, pretending they never happened, or failing to protect ourselves. Those who have seriously harmed us often demand these dispositions because they relieve the offender from fully admitting wrong-doing or changing their behaviors or social arrangements which leave the injured vulnerable. Forgiveness does mean the willingness to begin the process and be open to healing.

A special case exists in situations of war, terrorism, torture, and sexual abuse which involve a physical violation of the self. In these cases, forgiveness can almost never occur until the person who has been the victim of such violence names the suffering, reframes it in a healing narrative which resists the narrative of the lie, restores both one's sense of self and sense of safety, and then seeks some kind of reparation. Because the situation of violence silences the outrage of the victim against what has been done to them, the victim who survives often needs to express, cry out, lament, and experience the anger repressed in the presence of the oppressor. Many survivors are afraid or unwilling to move through this expressive stage because it feels useless or violent. Instead, this justified anger can be interpreted as a measure of the depth of the pain or threat inflicted by the original wound and as a way of honoring the suffering endured. It is only at this stage in the process ordinarily that a survivor may be grace-empowered to forgive the oppressor or least dramatically let it be, abstain from punishing, and avert attention so that the survivor is no longer defined by this particular suffering.⁸ By so doing, the survivor forgives—abandons the debt or in the

translation from the Aramaic of the line from the Lord's prayer, Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; the survivor manages to "Loose the cords of mistakes binding us, as we release the strands we hold of others' guilt."⁹ There is, I believe, no predictable time-line for this process. If we have consciously lived deeply into the Pascal mystery, we may be able to pray as Jesus did, "forgive them for they know not what they do." But the subsequent untangling of the knots within caused by suffering may take a life-time to finally reconcile. The early church recognized something of these dynamics when they placed the power of reconciliation of the *lapsi*, those who failed the test of martyrdom, in the hands of the confessors, those who survived violent persecution. It is only the aggrieved who can offer forgiveness. And it is this forgiveness which may initiate repentance on the part of the oppressor who cannot forgive himself but only seek it from another.

Attempts at reconciliation which fail to address the need for change or liberation from various forms of oppression can not bring about the new situation required to heal the individual or social wounds. There is no reconciliation without liberation. As Robert Schreiter argues, reconciliation require liberation.¹⁰ As Schreiter further points out, violence robs the tormentor of their humanity just as the violence is an attack against the humanity of another. It is only the victim who can be the agent of reconciliation, who can restore the oppressor's humanity through forgiveness which can then lead to the oppressor's repentance.

This forgiveness can not be forthcoming unless the truth of the injury is named and brought out into the light. In culturally and or religiously sanctioned violence, especially when supported by social structures and processes which support the oppressor, those who participate in, or benefit in such acts of violence are often unable to recognize they

have done anything wrong. They only followed the orders of legitimate authorities, their military commanders, their religious leaders. And they do not want to listen to the survivors and their story; they often want amnesty without participating in the process of healing required for the survivors to heal.

The mystery of the cross which reconciles all things is the key to it all. God reconciles us to Godself while we are still sinners. "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to Godself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us." (2 Cor:5:10-11) This kind of reconciliation, which sinks its roots all the way down through the cross of Christ, creates a new situation. We are not longer Jew or gentile, male or female, slave or free. We are no longer aliens or strangers. It is Christ who is "our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself a new humanity, in place of the two, thus making peace and reconciles both groups to God in one body through the cross." (Eph. 2:12-16) This is the new humanity entering through the doors of jubilee. And this newly unified and reconciled humanity can begin to sing its song of praise, jubilate, rejoice in such a promise which calls each of us to reconcile and heal one another from wherever we are within the church. Our jubilation is the song which rises irrepressibly when we open ourselves to God's reconciling grace which causes us to "Untangle the knots within so that we can mend our heart's simple ties to others,"¹¹ and "loose the cords of mistakes binding us, as we release the strands we hold of other's guilt."

Endnotes

1. *Incarnationis Mysterium in Origins*, 28 (December 10, 1998) #8, 449.
2. Archbishop Pilla, "Imperatives of Reconciliation in the Church" in *Origins* 27 (November 20, 1997), 384.
3. Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroad* (New York: Crossroad, 1997).
4. Maria Harris' chapter "Forgiveness as a Way of Being in the World" in *Proclaim Jubilee!* influenced much of my thinking about forgiveness in this section (Louisville: Westminster, 1996).
5. Sebastian Moore, *The Crucified Jesus is No Stranger* (New York: Crossroad, 1977).
6. Corrie Ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Books, 1971), 238.
7. Kathleen Fischer, *Autumn Gospel: Women in the Second Half of Life* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1995), 28.
8. This section is indebted to Kathleen Fisher's reflections.
9. Neil Douglas Klotz, *Prayers of the Cosmos: Meditations on the Aramaic Words of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper Collines, 1990,) 30.
10. Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 21. See also: Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998).
11. Douglas - Klotz, 30, an alternate translation of the phrase cited above.

