

## New Direction in Paulist Reconciliation Ministries

[Before we begin, I would like you to know that this project is a work-in-progress. Should you decide to participate, you will be the “test group” that I will run many things by in order to improve for future workshops and outreach. I thank you for your willingness to help me in a situation that is bigger than us all but is calling for us all to help. So, here we go...]

In light of the myriad of issues that are plaguing relationships in America, we have decided to take a new direction within the Paulist Reconciliation Ministries (PRM). Through our work, we hope to make PRM a hub that will aid visitors on their journey toward healing, hope, and harmony. It is important to note that our efforts are not intended to be a curative that will achieve reconciliation, rather they are meant to be provisions for the arduous journey toward reconciliation. Our outreach efforts will begin by outfitting the PRM website with informative resources to allow patrons to address issues, questions, and problems that arise in contemporary interpersonal interactions in order that these interactions may become more of a fertile ground for greater understanding and less of a combative or stagnant interplay that fuels brokenness. The website will be arranged to provide resources under three main categories of relationship:

- 1) **Personal Relationships** – which will deal with our relationship with our selves.
- 2) **Spiritual Relationships** – which will deal with our relationships with God, the Church, and all things divine.
- 3) **Social Relationships** – which will deal with our relationships with other people, either individuals or groups.

With this new direction, we seek to address these questions to name a few:

- 1) What are proponents and opponents of reconciliation saying these days?
- 2) What situations need reconciliation and which ones need conciliation?
- 3) How can we understand the power of reconciliation in the present of wrathful vitriol?
- 4) How does reconciliation measure up to our desires for justice?
- 5) What are the requirements of reconciliation vs. mercy?
- 6) What are the questions that people ask about reconciliation?
- 7) What are the current hindrances to (relationship healing)/(reconciliation) that need to be addressed/confronted?
- 8) What are the contemporary opportunities for reconciliation? And, who’s facilitating them?

I am beginning this new direction by first gathering with our partners in ministry within our current foundations to get their insights and offerings on the question of reconciliation. I plan to visit with The Paulist Associates (and any other interested main ministry of our foundations) to workshop an info sessions/visioning/Q&A. The schedule of our 90 minutes together would be structured as such:

- Opening Prayer
- Intro to the plan for New Direction in Reconciliation Ministry
- Information Gathering Session (small groups)
  - What specific questions regarding reconciliation do you believe are being asked?
  - What are the challenges regarding reconciliation?
  - What are the opportunities regarding reconciliation?
  - What resources are you aware of that could assist in efforts to educate, promote, or enhance reconciliation efforts?
- Visioning Session (large group)

- What would you like to see PRM offer?
- What do you believe is an effective means of reaching people in need of resources and support for reconciliation efforts?
- What are your thoughts about some ideas for outreach that I will present to you?
- Q&A Session
- What are your questions regarding this direction for PRM?
- Follow-up information
- Closing Prayer

In preparation for this workshop, I ask you to read two articles and do a reflection assignment. The first article, “The U.S. Is Not Doing Well Socially” (C. Lane, 2017) is a reflection of a worldwide study that measures the wellbeing of people country-by-country. It lets us know how the U.S. ranks categorically with some fodder for our own reflection. As you read this article, consider your thoughts are about the implications of our state of wellbeing on relationships and what might be needed in light of these findings.

The second article, “Must You Forgive?” (Safer, 2016) is one authors take on what forgiveness requires and suggests situations where giving said forgiveness is more harmful than helpful. As you read this article, consider how the author is defining forgiveness and how you might both agree and disagree with the authors suggestions.

Finally, for the reflection assignment, I ask you to provide responses to the questions posed for the Information Gathering Session, which will be done in small groups:

- **What specific questions regarding reconciliation do you believe are being asked?** (Rather than asking general questions such as, “How do I say I’m sorry?” go into the detail of the issue at hand to ask situationally specific questions like, “How do I say I’m sorry to a friend who does not want any contact with me any longer?”)
- **What are the challenges regarding reconciliation?** (For this response, look at the emotional, social, physical, or psychological reasons for barriers, impasses, or walls.)
- **What are the opportunities regarding reconciliation?** (Go strictly on your personal observations for this question. What have you either observed or been involved in that is a vehicle or facilitation for reconciliation?)
- **What resources are you aware of that could assist in efforts to educate, promote, or enhance reconciliation efforts?** (Anything that you can offer will be greatly appreciated!)

In addition to you beautiful selves and your wonderful thoughts and opinions, please bring paper and writing instruments. We will go for no more than 90 minutes because it can be intensive work.

Again, thanks so much for being a part of this workshop. We really need your insights and support. I look forward to our time together on Friday, September 28th! In the meantime, stay blessed!

Fr. Steven Bell, CSP