

RESTORING HUMAN DIGNITY

by

br. Theo van den Broek ofm ¹

Introduction

First of all I would like to express my gratitude for the invitation to participate in this extra-ordinary meeting. It is a great honour to be here and to be asked to contribute to the discussion. I will do so by sharing some of the experiences we in the Office for Justice and Peace (OJP) in Jayapura have gone through over the last couple of years. I would like to stress that our experiences and way of working are far from normative for others, but I hope that sharing these experiences might in a modest way help you to come closer to your own answer as a Passionist Family to the challenges of today's world.

I will center my contribution around 4 simple questions related to the call for solidarity: why, what, how and who? Why should we opt for solidarity? What makes the call for solidarity so pressing? How can we give expression to this solidarity? And with whom we should be involved in making our efforts more effective?

Why? - Some basic values

Asking myself the question why I am involved in the work for justice and peace, I just remembre a day somewhere in April 1995 when I faced a group of local people who were desperately looking for someone, some organisation to take up their defence. They showed their marks of been beaten up and injured. Representing the bishop when meeting them, I felt I just had no choice, and committed the church with their cause. So I don't feel a born human rights fighter, I am just someone who responded. Why did I respond? Reflecting on this question there might have been several inspiring elements that helped me not to hesitate.

First of all I am reminded of St. Francis of Assisi. When struggling for an answer how to shape his own life and give it a substantial meaning, he encounters the world from the point of view of the leper. Confronted with these 'public outcasts' he is inclined to run away, but something nonetheless tranfixes him and finally he gets down from his horse and literally embraces the leper. His embrace represents a very intimate way of dealing with people. It was a very difficult step, but once made, it oriented the rest of his life and brought him into contact with the source of Life. In his Testament he refers to this event as the most decisive one in his life; his embrace of the leper, the

¹ Director of the Office for Justice and Peace in the Diocese of Jayapura, Papua (Indonesia). This paper is a contribution to the meeting of the Passionists of Asia-Pacific, held in Madang (PNG), 28 Sept – 2 Oct. 2003 with as central theme: "The Passionists proclaim the Word of the Cross: Formation for Solidarity in the service of Justice".

marginalized person within medieval society, was the key moment of conversion for Francis.

Secondly the question reminds me of a simple story in the Gospel (Matth. 14,13-21) where the key-word is: *seeing so many people Jesus felt moved*, his heart spoke up. The story shows in a challenging way what “feeling moved” might be capable of achieving and how it counters any ‘over-rationalistic attitude’ as expressed by the disciples who would rather have sent the people off and ‘for good reasons’, as they weren’t in a position to feed them. Jesus’ attitude might be hard to understand, still His way of acting challenges us to go beyond mere hard and calculated reasoning and opens up to unexpected fresh realities when we take the risk of sharing our lives with others without weighing up the pros and cons.

Thirdly I would like to draw attention to the story which tells of Jesus’ first meeting Peter after his death and after being betrayed by the same Peter (Joh. 21,1-17). It is the story of the meeting on the beach after an unsuccessful night’s fishing. One of the ‘resurrection-stories’ which highlights the way Jesus is giving life to Peter is the way he restores his self-esteem, self-confidence and his dignity. No accusations made. Jesus just prepares a meal and invites Peter to sit down and have a meal together. It is a powerful story of reconciliation, and Robert J. Schreiter C.P.P.S. gives the story a central place in his book “The ministry of reconciliation”²

These three sources of inspiration (and for certain many can be add to them) provide us with some basic values which are well worth considering central to our own way of living and acting. They point to a full understanding and respecting of the dignity of each person, and it is this very dignity that is at stake in the complicated world of today.

The quotations might make us sensitive to three main aspects basic to our way of living and working in solidarity. These three are: [1] *inclusiveness*, nobody should be excluded from our caring attention; [2] *compassion*: listen to your heart or the openness which prompts our heart to respond; and [3] *reconciliation*: restoring relations while giving anyone a second or third (even seven times seven) chance, regardless of whatever suffering the person may have caused.

What? - Fields of attention

Inspired by the gospel as well as our respective founders we are invited to open up to the surrounding world and to provide ‘life which is for real’ according to the most demanding call that any human being (and other beings) naturally asked us to listen to: the call to be respected in his/her/its dignity as a being.

² Robert J. Schreiter C.P.P.S., The Ministry of Reconciliation, Spirituality & Strategies, p. 83.

It is not a secret that scores of real situations don't reflect this respect for human dignity. Just looking at what we face in Papua I would like to mention various fields that might demand our special attention and might invite the participants of this meeting to reflect on the key problems in their own respective situation.

1. VIOLENCE : denial of human dignity

Violence, a daily pattern

Over the years I have witnessed people being killed, tortured or beaten up because of their socio-political beliefs, or because they just don't understand what is happening around them. Over a long period of time (1960 - 2003) Papuans have been killed or mistreated as they protested the way they have been handled politically, socially and culturally. The central government backed by security forces claim to know what is the best for the people, and claim to have the right to force anybody to bow to their 'legal' will. This has ended up in a complete denial of basic rights (to speak up, to get the needed education, to get economical opportunities etc), a complete denial of human dignity (why bother about 'primitive people'??). The step from denial of human dignity to 'the right to kill' has been proved very small.

Domestic violence

Physical violence is not just limited to the 'political world' but is often also found in the daily family life. Reports on wife-beating, the mishandling of children, or on sexual abuse of partners are common in Papua, and it is often amazing how this kind of treatment is hardly been given any attention in our male dominated Papua-world. The respect for human dignity is at stake on a very daily level.

2. TOLERANCE - INTOLERANCE

The multi-cultural setting

Respect for differences in culture and religion is often looked for, but as often not found. For instance, although recognizing each other as original inhabitants of Papua it still seems hard for coastal groups to give credit to their people from the mountains. The people from the north of Papua who have been enjoying access to education and to an earlier contact with the outside world often show a kind of superiority towards their compatriots from the south or the mountains. The situation has become still more complicated as scores of people from other Indonesian islands have flooded into Papua. They very often feel much cleverer and more civilised than Papuans, and are often better equipped to cope with economical opportunities, and generally adhere to another religion (Islam).

From difference to conflict

This 'multi-cultural, multi-religious society' demands for an explicit effort by all parties to respect each other in their respective differences. This is easily said, but very hard to be achieved. The lack of tolerance leads easily to conflict, as people who feel their own identity (and dignity) denied are easily ready to defend their well-being by all

means. Above that economical conflicts can be easily turned into a religious conflict as has been proved over the last years in Papua; but not only there: it has been proved in Indonesia (Maluku, Sulawesi, Kalimantan), and it has been proved worldwide (NewYork –September 2001-, Bali –October 2002-, Iraq –2003).

3. (UN)EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Being in charge of your own life

Under this heading we like to refer to differences in opportunities to be in charge of your own life and the life of the community, its development, its fulfilling of basic needs. In everyday terms it means the opportunity to get a job, to make a living, to have a roof over your head, to have bread in the cupboard, to have your voice heard and to be treated equally before the law. It means access to education, to healthcare, to participation in decision-making on any level of the society, access to information and the freedom to communicate.

Inadequate conditions

Looking at the situation in Papua we have to conclude that a lot of suffering is caused by unequal opportunities. The original inhabitants of Papua are losing out to the people coming in from outside (migrants). The education system is very poor and leaves countless numbers of people uneducated, hence not equipped to fill in the job-opportunities. The impact of this very damaging infrastructure is strengthened by growing corruption on almost every level of the administration as well as by narrow ethnic concepts in which people in the position to recruit do so from a basis of nepotism rather than by adhering to an objective assessment of candidate quality.

It has to be admitted that budget-wise Papua has benefited from many opportunities over the years, but the same fact has led to a rapidly increasing ‘culture of corruption’ as well. This ‘culture of corruption’ formerly was limited to people from outside Papua, civil servants, traders and such. But over the last year the same culture has rapidly spread among the Papuans themselves as they are nowadays much more involved in the official administration than ever before. Hence we now face internally (within the original Papuan community) a growing inequality, and in the worst cases Papuans selling Papuans, because of their own personal gain.

The latest example of such a reality is demonstrated by the trend to divide up the Papua province into three or more provinces. The division is mainly based on the personal ambition of certain Papuans to get themselves a position in which they have access to governmental resources. To obtain this position they are ready to sell their own people, to reach compromises with the central government and the security forces who are quite happy to play along in order to crack down on the liberation movement which has picked up momentum over the last years. The whole trend fits the description of “divide et impera”. Only a very small elite will gain from this division and a large part of the community will become the victim, surveying developing

events from the sidelines, unable to join in. Given this evident increase in corruption and all the effects linked to it the situation in Papua is very worrying.

Information gap

As the opportunities are mainly decided on by people in the urban centers, the gap between them and the community far inland (where most of the original inhabitants are living), is growing rapidly. This is not only true when looked upon it from the point of view of economic activities but as much true when looked at it from the point of view of access to information and communication. There is hardly any balanced information available in the inland about developments, hence people are relying on the little bits (often mere slogans or rumours: either from the official side – government – or from own interest groups like the liberation movement) that reach them. This leads easily to false (often inflated) expectations. People's dreams are betrayed by the realities, and frustrations mount. This lack of access to information paralyses the local community, or puts it on the wrong foot, and makes any effective participation in decision-making a mere piece of theatre.

Traditional (in)equality

Dealing with (in)equality of opportunities it should also be mentioned more explicitly than I did above that the traditional past carries with it a strikingly patriarchal way of thinking and living. Equality between men and women is not a very familiar element in the local traditions. Hence gender issues should be taken very seriously, especially also as Papua is more and more moving to a dramatic increase of HIV/AIDS, the highest infection rate in Indonesia, and still increasing with a devastating speed every month. What is said about the relation between local traditions and the gender issue might be applied as well to traditions in our catholic church.

4. POWER SHARING – POWERLESSNESS

Disturbing power play

Still more worrying is the fact that local people are so easily manipulated, or even mistreated by institutions in power, especially by the security forces. Papua has a lot of security personal all over the place. Besides being arrogant (because they have the guns!) they are a real threat because of the fact that they are not just there to maintain security, but also to make a living for their institution or for themselves as an individual. This might sound a bit strange to people from outside, but it might be better understood when I explain that the budget for the army and the police is only 30% covered by the central national administration. These institutions themselves have to look for the rest of the budget (70%), hence mainly involving themselves in economic activities which often flout legality. In a recent publication by an NGO (Forest Indonesia Watch) it is told that over the last month 60.000 cubic metres of logs have been illegally exported from Papua. The report doesn't name the institution behind these illegal activities but anyone who is familiar with Papua knows that quite

a substantial part (to say the least) of these activities are related to the security forces.

The impact on the local community is still more dramatically illustrated in the 'sandelwood-industry'. Traders and security people are working together to collect this expensive sandelwood which only can be found deep in the forests. Local people are hired to do the job. When delivering their materials at the base camp (after an extensive stay in the forest) they are paid for it (not in proportion to the high economical value of the materials they are delivering) and the money can be spent on the spot on shopping (run by sandelwood tradesmen) and on women made available. These sex-workers are mainly sex-workers who have worked in many other places previously and are at their last stage of service. Not surprising that HIV / AIDS is rapidly spreading via this kind of base-camps.

Powerlessness

Often people cannot refuse to be at the service of traders and other connected parties. Especially when the army or police is involved people are scared and feel powerless to stand up for themselves. This situation is also found in areas where villages are alleged to be connected with the liberation movement (especially the OPM or TPN). The security forces just move into these villages while accusing the villagers arbitrarily of 'separatist activities'. This have been shown again in recent incidents in the highlands around Wamena. The security people take the attitude that they are always right, leaving no room for discussion or proper investigation, and claiming the right to act according to their will (this can mean detention, beatings, torture and even extra-judicial killings). Speaking about equality before the law it has been a very sad experience over the years that the security forces, especially their commanders, normally get away with anything, while once in a while offering a lower ranked person to be taken to court and sentenced (unproportionally). This aspect is normally referred to as "certain parties enjoying impunity before the law".

I have just mentioned a number of areas where respect for human dignity is much at stake; the selection (and a selection it is!) is made referring to Papua and I assume that any participant in this meeting can draw up his/her own picture referring to the respective areas he or she is coming from. Any of the fields mentioned invites us to respond from within our mission 'to give life', as in any of these contexts, life is damaged and even being destroyed.

How? - Activities by Office for Justice & Peace Jayapura

Responding to the various fields of attention mentioned above, the Office for Justice and Peace (OJP) has developed a number of activities, although far from covering sufficiently all the worrying issues mentioned. The activities by the OJP cover four main elements: [1] advocacy, [2] information and awareness raising, [3] training, [4] peace-building, and [5] the dialogue with religious leaders. I will dwell shortly on the first three fields of activities and will give some more elaborate attention to the peace-building and the interreligious dialogue.

A. ADVOCACY ASPECT

Where needed (means that when nobody else / no other organisation picks up the challenge) OJP feels urged to expose certain incidents and their impact. We have been writing reports on various incidents over the years (almost on any of the major violent incidents in Papua since 1998. It might be interesting to know that OJP normally publishes its human rights violations reports under the responsibility of three main churches in Papua. Fully prepared by OJP the reports are signed by the leaders of the three churches. We opt for that formula for very pragmatical reasons, i.e. to ensure a heavier impact of the report in official circles.

B. INFORMATION / AWARENESS RAISING ASPECT

The social-political atmosphere in Indonesia, and specifically in Papua, became highly complicated in recent years. It is not surprising when the majority of the people find it hard to understand the development in all its complexity. This is especially true for people living outside the centers of major cities, namely those living in the inlands. This also applied to both domestic and foreign institutions that do not have direct experience with situation developments in Papua. They also experience difficulties to understand what has really happened, or is happening in Papua. It shows that the government officials/policy makers in Papua Province do not communicate effectively and that transparency of the policies is not emphasized. Therefore, over the years OJP was involved in a number of attempts to communicate its understanding of the prevailing situation and developments.

Year Book

An important element in the OJP agenda during the last three years is the publishing of a yearbook. We accomplished this for the years 1999, 2000 and 2001 while the one on 2002 is still in train. The yearbook is published under the title MEMORIA PASSIONIS and spread among all circles in Papua and sold in Jayapura, Jakarta and Yogyakarta. Each yearbook contains a summary of events taking place in the respective years as well as of a brief analysis of the elements/developments perceivable from the reported events. The yearbook is generally received well.

C. TRAINING ASPECT

As a part of its activities, OJP provided “Human Rights training” in various places in the hinterland. This form of activity had been developed since the very start of OJP’s activities.

“Human Rights Training” increasingly serves as a training that helps common people understand their actual condition. Adequate amount of time should be provided in order to make a joint social analysis that enables the people to comprehend how the situation developed as it is now. The analysis should provide ample opportunity for describing the “old traditions” (as a common guiding principle in the past) and the “new traditions” (manifested in the principles of human rights as a guiding principle today). This simple approach proves to be very fruitful in helping the people to understand their position in the present conditions with all its complex demands.

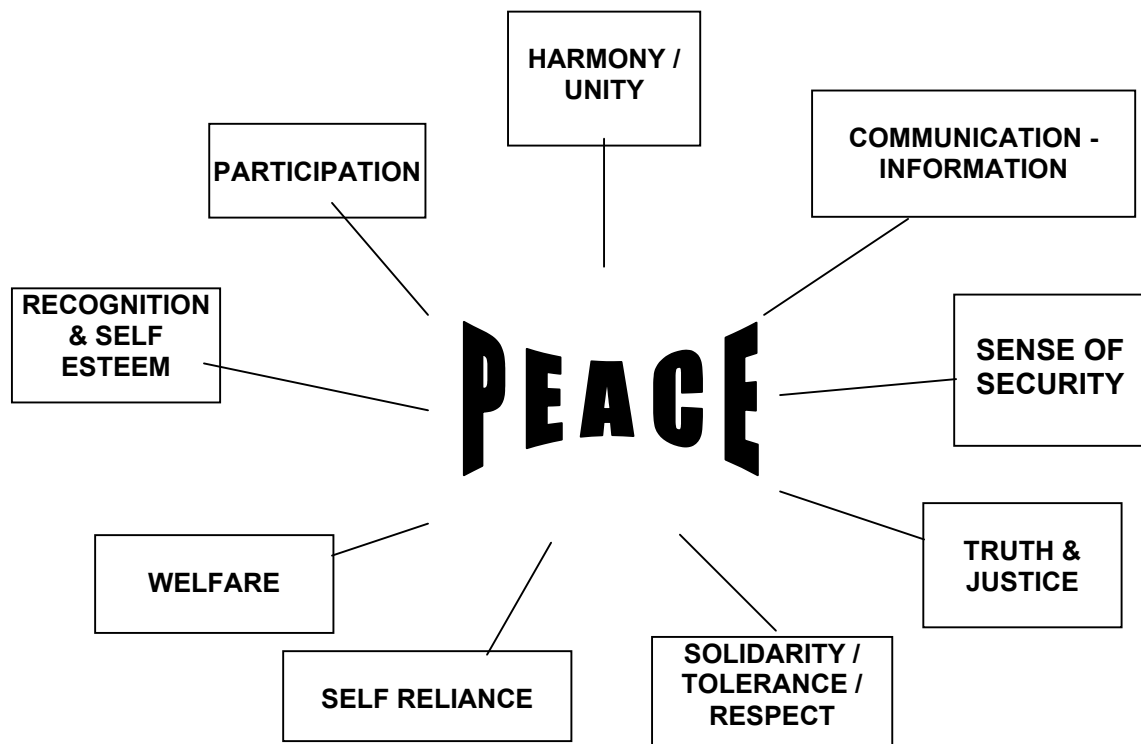
The content of the training (4 day-workshop at the least) consists of roughly three parts: [1] the understanding of developments in Papua and the related human rights issues at local level; [2] reflection on the means to find a way out; and [3] a number of actual, specific issues widely talked about by the people, or thematic issues such as gender.

D. “BUILDING PEACE CULTURE” ASPECT

“Building Peace Culture” aspect was the main focus in the year 2002/3. Exploring the essence and details of this aspect, it became clear how difficult it is to give tangible contents to what is meant concretely by “peace”. Nevertheless it should be said that this aspect has played an important role in OJP activities, including in the style to address violent incidents (Advocacy) and in the style of dialogues with various parties, for example: the management of Oksibil case early in the year that ended in “peace agreement” (which was only short-lasting!). Other organisations as well make “peace-building” their popular theme. Public speeches on “Building Peace Culture” (Papua Land of Peace) have been frequent in Papua, including by the regional government, the Papua Presidium Council, and the security forces. However, there is the impression that this aspect had simply become a slogan without contents.

For several months OJP made a great effort to find a way to translate its intention into real activities. A major workshop was organised in November 2002 involving a rather representative delegation of various components of the Papuan community.

It might be worthwhile to offer this meeting an idea about how we have filled in the concept.



All the components above are important and can serve as principles in formulating activities and policies in our efforts to "develop a culture of peace". Many of these components are "politically loaded", or require action that accords with this.

PARTICIPATION:

As members of a community, we all have the right to take part in building the world around us. Just as it was in the past (when communities were organized along the lines of local traditions/customs (*adat*) and everyone had a distinct role), today, all members of the community are expected to take an active role in taking care of community affairs. This participation can be realized through involvement in local governance; helping to determine government policies or by supervising the execution of its policies.

Experience shows that many of the important decisions taken in Indonesia - and especially in Papua - are made by a small group of people. The majority of the community forms a 'voiceless' group unable to bring about the changes and progress they desire. Similar powerlessness is experienced when it comes to the fulfillment of basic needs. The time has come for the Papuan community to become *agents*, not *victims*, of history.

Opportunities for participation are increasing in this era of reform, especially with the Special Autonomy provisions for Papua (*Otsus*). The Papuan community has been given the confidence to organize itself to meet its needs and determine its own future.

SOLIDARITY AND TOLERANCE / RESPECT

Participation is strongly tied to the sense of togetherness among people who come from diverse backgrounds and different ethnic, cultural, religious and gender identities. In everyday life, solidarity is mostly determined by blood ties, place of origin, ethnicity, shared history, place of residence and/or a feeling of shared fate in fortune and misfortune. These aspects of identity can become a strong bond between people - but they are dangerous if they are regarded as the only true cohesive value (narrow primordialism) as is implied by the oft-heard expressions to the tune of: “we’re Papuan, you’re Amber³; we’re mountain people, you’re from coastal areas”, etc.

Solidarity is also determined by a sense of equality and shared commitment to those values respected by all human communities, such as truth, peace, justice, etc. These are values that guarantee the continuation of human life under any conditions. Solidarity is not the same as uniformity or equality. On the contrary, within solidarity there are ‘differences’ that should be viewed as strengths and assets.

In the context of creating “Papua, a land of peace”, a tolerant attitude (that is mutual recognition and valuing of uniqueness) and the disavowal of extreme fanaticism is one of the essential keys to helping prevent the occurrence of a conflict based on identity. This attitude to life needs to become a part of our basic education within the family unit and cultivated in other inner circles of acquaintance. We can also work to achieve it by communicating with other groups through dialogue between religious communities or ethnic groups, and dialogue between different components of society (the military, police, NGOs, LMA, government and other community groups) so that we can develop a joint commitment to strive for peace in Papua.

INFORMATION / COMMUNICATION

The prerequisite to participation in community life is having information, access to sources of information and the freedom to communicate, as we desire. Communication and information is fundamental to any kind participation in today’s world.

Incorrect information can only mislead people. While correct information helps

³ The term “Amber” is mainly used to indicate that someone is from outside Papua.

people position themselves in relation to others. There is a lot of misleading information circulating in communities in Papua at present: this relates to rumors of “masked people” associated with Laskar Jihad; suggestions that the Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, would get involved in the diplomatic politics of Papuan independence; the rumored visit of Kofi Annan to Wamena and Manokwari; and so forth. False and misleading information such as this makes the community nervous, confused and afraid. Any attempt to censor or blur the truth is also a form of misinformation. Clearly, the mass media plays a pivotal role in regard to this issue. When the media are exclusively “profit oriented”, they treat news as merchandise, and fail to contribute to public awareness or knowledge. Consequently, it is not unusual for a newspaper in Papua to be filled with sensational news or for a media agency to secure its income by serving as a mouthpiece for those in power.

Traditional owners of land are sometimes surprised when companies arrive ready to set up operations on the community’s traditional lands armed with licenses from the government (Jakarta) without forewarning let alone any consultation with the local community. Information about such matters, which is deliberately blocked, does not only wreak havoc on the development plans of the company and government, but also on the state of the community where the development is planned.

WELFARE

In Papua, like everywhere else, people need to eat and drink; they require shelter, guarantees of safety and so forth. In the language of the Mee ethnic community this is called mobu, which literally translates as “full or satisfied”. The word implies a sense of material and spiritual satisfaction where no-one need suffer from hunger, poverty or disease. Among the Dani people, the duty of a leader is focused on “ensuring fertility”, which means that all members of the community should be given the opportunity to develop and have equal access to collective forms of wealth, such as land or other resources. Similarly, each member of the community deserves the equal right to be healthy and educated. In brief, welfare means that all basic needs of every person, not just a minority of people, are fulfilled. Without equitable community welfare, there will be no peace.

Especially in this era of Special Autonomy with its influx of funding, the political will - in the form of regional government development policies - needs to be targeted at improving welfare for the Papuan people by making them “economic participants”, not just “spectators”. As can be seen throughout Papua today, business centers are all controlled by non-Papuans. The powerlessness of the Papuans is demonstrated by the market traders who sit on the dirt floor to sell their wares, or by the Papuan women who earnestly try to make some rupiah by hawking the produce of their gardens on the side of the road or on the footpath under the intense sun.

SECURITY

A sense of security constitutes a basic need of all people. This fact has encouraged all components of society to try to fulfil this need through various methods and actions. While creating a sense of security is a task of the entire community, this does not mean that all civilians are obliged to take part in the community security system (Siskamling), for example, or to be recruited to assist a military operation, or to serve as members of the Red and White Garrison (*Barisan Merah Putih*). All components of the community can contribute to the security of their society by carrying out their social duties in a positive way (without corruption, with discipline and respecting others, etc.)

To build a truly “New Papua”, where the people can live in peace and enjoy safety as a basic right, there must be greater effort toward law enforcement. This should be the main role of the police and law enforcement agencies. They need support to become more professional and independent in performing their duties. It is very unfortunate that several humanitarian incidents in Papua, which have caused great suffering in the community, have not been properly dealt with under the law. Resolving such issues depends heavily on the political will to create “Papua, a land of peace”. As long as there are still parties who do not wish for peace in Papua, the desire of the community to live in peace will not be realized.

TRUTH AND JUSTICE

Truth and justice are basic values in all dealings of our communal life. The people of Papua, when telling their life story never forget the misery they have suffered for years. Many feel as if they have been wounded; made the victims of the ideologies of both national and international authorities. They have been respected as people only as far as they benefit people or groups in power.

Several practical/strategic steps can be taken to bring about truth and justice - advocacy, research, declaration of facts, mediation and negotiation - to raise awareness of and look for solutions to issues in relation to this component that are considered to be essential for the Papuan community. These steps are aimed at realizing genuine law enforcement for all (to stop the virtual legal impunity of certain groups). They are also aimed at providing transparent information of what is true and what is false.

SELF-RELIANCE

We all want to feel we are in charge of our lives and that we can take care of ourselves without depending on other people. This means that people of Papua

must take the initiative in optimizing the potential of their resources (both natural and human).

The tendency toward a “project mentality” is the antithesis of independence. A “project mentality” translates into a community’s dependence on external help. The community does not have confidence in its potential to look after itself, let alone to determine its own future. As long as the “project mentality” holds sway over the attitude of the community, and as long as the government encourages this attitude through aid projects, such as the Social Safety Net (JPS), District Development Project (PPK), rise aid (Beras Opsus), Crash Program, etc, the community continues to wait for others to act as its life support. In fact, this “project mentality” indirectly kills the creativity of the people; it makes them dependent, an object of other people’s decisions and creates a false impression people are in control of the livelihood.

“To take charge of one’s life“ doesn’t mean restricting oneself, ignoring other people’s aspirations or potential changes for the better. Instead, we need to be prepared to work with other components of society to promote the sound development of the community.

SELF-ESTEEM AND RECOGNITION

It is clear that the self-esteem of the Papuan people has been suppressed to the point that it has almost ceased to exist. Many Papuans have begun to feel inferior because they are regarded as ignorant primitives. Such attitudes are the result of a discriminatory environment that has continued for decades, and in which, for example, there was no opportunity for traditional celebrations and artistic expression, or, in some instances, such events were prohibited outright.

In the history of Papuan peoples’ suffering, the self-esteem and recognition of the Papuan people have often depended on the way others have regarded and acted toward them. However, the reality is that the self-esteem and recognition of Papuans have also been greatly determined by the behavior of Papuans themselves. Bad habits – such as the frequenting bars, not working hard at work, not wanting work in the fields, getting drunk and the like - erode the dignity of the Papuan people. The time has come to work to negate the basis of this social stigma through a convincing display of personal dignity.

UNITY / HARMONY

We are all part of a unity much greater than our own existence. Humankind recognizes that the universe is its only dwelling-place and that human life is inseparable from the land, water and other life forms. For centuries the universe was understood and protected through a variety of inherited traditions, such as those

expressed in the various philosophies of life held by the Papuan people. For example, for the Amungme people, the land is a mother who gives life. Because of this, customs were created within the Amungme communal tradition to carefully regulate the land's use.

However, it appears that the dynamics of development in Papua take an exploitative pattern where land is taken over and forest felled completely to promote various initiatives, such as transmigration, mining and timber processing. Rivers and oceans are polluted due to investor activities such as these. The environment is truly threatened – even in this era of autonomy and Special Autonomy - when the focus of development is centered on the realization of the greatest possible regional profit through the exploitation of natural resources with huge capital investment.

Being aware of the importance of the integrity of the universe and the future sustainability of human life, we must come to a true understanding of how we should utilize it. An understanding of integrity and harmony must be expressed in our lives through our relations with God/Life's Mystery, with one another, and in our relations with the environment. The universe, including its people in all their ethnic, racial and religious variety, is God's creation.

E. DIALOGUE WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

As one of the important activities OJP has involved itself in over the last three years, and narrowly related to the efforts of building a “culture of peace” I like to draw attention to the dialogue with religious leaders, aimed at the creation of unity among religious leaders in Papua.

In part OJP helped the religious leaders by providing information and invited them to discuss several developments. The discussions addressed central topics: [1] efforts to discourage the use of violence by any parties; [2] law enforcement, particularly pertaining to investigation and settlement of human rights violation cases; and [3] common perception with regard to concern-raising phenomena such as the presence of *Laskar Jihad*, and similar groups.

OJP's contribution to the discussions was intended to help the participants analyse and understand what is happening, the major developments and their direction, to devise any acceptable solutions and in what way religious leaders could contribute in addressing the developments⁴.

Summarising the activities of OJP it might be concluded that our efforts center around: [1] truth-telling (via credible reports and advocacy), [2] opinion-

⁴ Special action by religious leaders in Papua, see Annex 1.

building (via spreading of information and trainings), and [3] co-operation- and peace-building

Who? - No solitary job

Going through the range of activities of OJP it might have become clear as well that “working on Justice and Peace” is not a solitary job. Our work can only be effective if connected with other actors in the society.

Because of the sensitivity of religious issues nowadays we have been especially keen on developing a pattern of cooperation with the leaders of various religions in Papua (Christian –Catholic and Protestant- , Islam, Hindu and Buddhist). For the time being this cooperation is rather practical in its kind, resulting in taking a common stand on special events, and in proclaiming a shared commitment to peace.

In a recent international meeting⁵ the role of religious leaders was expressed as follows: “Civil society, comprised of working professionals, intellectuals, small business groups, NGOs and religious organisations, can play a crucial role in peacebuilding. In this mix, religious organisations and their leadership play a unique role in connecting the different strata of their society. Their relationship to the grassroots level of their society puts them in an important position for feeling, understanding and responding to conflict as it develops. These mid-level leaders can assist top-level leaders, often in confidential settings, in thinking through alternative positions based on the articulation of their interests. As well, religious leaders, through their religious organisations, can call upon the international community for support. Religious groups are simultaneously local, national and international entities. They are on the ground, but also part of an extensive and constantly growing transnational network”.

Another very important group to work with is the group of local NGO’s. We have quite a number of them, but it has to be admitted that the quality of them is often very poor (as to internal management, program as well as capability). Still it is an important group to be related to in a joint effort to promote a more just society. On this level we reach out to national as well as international organisations, and slowly we are well connected to a vast network.

Statement to the UN Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR)

Invited by our partner *Franciscans International* in Geneva, OJP was given a chance to attend the annual session of the UNCHR in Geneva in 2002 and 2003. Besides giving a statement on Papua to the plenary session, we took advantage of the occasion for a meeting with permanent international delegates in Geneva (including the permanent delegates of the Republic of Indonesia). We strive in such opportunities to provide additional understanding on the real issues in Papua.

Efforts have been made to create some working relationship with official authorities (government, including the parliament) and the security forces. It will not surprise you when I tell you that this relation is often very tense and not free from negative suspicion on both sides, especially when dealing with security forces.

⁵ Conference on Peace-Building, held at Caux (Swiss), 2-8 August 2003.

In the context of this meeting it might be useful to make a special note on the position of OJP activities within our own church context. Although our work is very effectively backed by our bishops in Papua, at the same time it is our experience that the 'peace and justice mission' is still too much looked at as 'delegated to our office' only. To put it bluntly: "the OPJ will take care of that mission, so we – other church personnel – don't have to bother about that". I honestly think that such an attitude, although understandable, is a real mistake as I look at this mission as a substantial part of any pastoral care nowadays. It should be part of any parish-based pastoral work and should involve pastors, religious, catechists and parish councils to start with. Referring to my opening remarks about the three main evangelical values which are basic to our mission (inclusiveness, compassion and restoration) I am convinced anybody who claims to be involved in pastoral care should make the 'peace and justice mission' the very heart of his or her work. It looks like that as an Office for Justice and Peace we still have a very demanding internal job to do in order to give birth to a larger church community that is responding to the needs of today while being faithful to its very mission to "give life and dignity" to this world.

Some concluding remarks

Concluding this rather long paper I like to conclude that "the mission of restoring human dignity" should be at the very heart of our right to exist as a religious group within the church. The way this mission will be expressed depends largely in the very local world we are living in, even while knowing that our local world hardly can be fully understood without taken into account global developments. Nevertheless the local challenges and threats to human dignity are at our doorsteps and visible for anyone who likes to see them.

I have tried to picture the expression of this mission in my own context of Papua and from within my own position in an Office for Justice and Peace. I feel myself not in the position to fill in the picture for others, and in that sense any local expression might be unique and relevant its own context. Nevertheless it might be worthwhile to hint to possible common features, such as:

- a. the need to express concretely the mentioned basic elements of inclusiveness, compassion and reconciliation
- b. the creation of simple signs of hope amidst a struggling community
- c. taking part in, sharing with or just simple living together honestly and visibly with the marginalised in our community
- d. promoting the sensitivity for all aspects of human dignity (especially the threatened ones) among our own pastoral and religious cadres in the church
- e. involving a large part of the community into the mission
- f. opening the doors widely for mutual trust especially where dealing with 'traditional enemies'

- g. reaching out without calculation to any people or organisation of 'good will', whatsoever her/his/its background, in order to create a joint effort for a more men-women friendly world, to safeguard and to give life to the divine dignity of every being.

It goes without saying that the world nowadays challenges any religious group in a very demanding way. As communication has become within reach of most of us, nobody can honestly say that "we didn't know" how much human dignity is threatened nowadays on any level of the society. Our response seems to be needed more than ever.

Thank you very much for your readiness and patience to listen.

Br. Theo van den Broek OFM

Jayapura, 25 September 2003

ANNEX 1

A special event was held on 21 September 2002 in Jayapura, i.e. the UN declared International Prayer Day for Peace.

International Prayer Day for Peace

The United Nations declared 21 September an “International Prayer Day for Peace”. Religious leaders in Papua responded positively to the UN initiative. On 21 September 2002 (Saturday night) religious leaders in Papua – Christians, Moslems, Buddhists, and Hindu – were unified in a “prayer procession” in Jayapura, the capital of Papua Province. They were successful involving other institutions to take part in the occasion. Also seen in the street, in addition to the religious leaders, were regional government officials, Chairperson of the Regional Legislature, university rector, *Kapolda* (Chief of Regional Police) and *Pangdam XVII Trikora* (Chief of Regional Military Command). They were accompanied by student delegates and a group of community members whose number continued to increase during the procession in downtown Jayapura.

The event took place four hours with five stoppages for prayer according to the five religions involved. The procession ended at the regional police headquarters where the leaders lit 12 candles of peace as a symbol of goodwill and joint commitment for “Building Peace Culture” to make Papua a Land of Peace.

The event was particularly fascinating due to the unique blend of different religious traditions and different institutions in Papua. The whole event has unified the participants in an atmosphere of reflection and hopefulness. The theme of the event was clearly stated in the writing on banners set along the area between Jayapura and Sentani, which said: “Peace for Me, Peace for You, Peace for Us All”, and “Peace is Beautiful”. The event has showed a collective spirit to maintain peace in Papua amidst of all the present tensions.

This year “the International prayer day for peace” was again given attention on the 21th of September. We gathered a couple of hundred of mainly young people into a peaceful and joyful march in the center of Abepura (education town near to Jayapura) and topped it off with a local music concert in the open air in the near of the main Papuan University, Cenderawasih which was attended by thousands of people. During the concert a number of people have been given the opportunity to address the crowd with an appeal for peace.