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## Toward an Integral Catholic Peacebuilding

Gerard Powers

*University of Notre Dame / Director of Catholic Peacebuilding Studies at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies*

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## **Toward an Integral Catholic Peacebuilding<sup>1</sup>**

**Gerard F. Powers**  
**University of Notre Dame**

*Among the many under-examined aspects of Catholic approaches to peacebuilding are its ecclesiological and practical dimensions. This article suggests that an Integral Catholic Peacebuilding calls for deepening the Catholic community's commitment to peacebuilding as a vocation, especially by reinvigorating the lay vocation; cultivating distinctively Catholic approaches to peacebuilding while engaging inclusively, especially through strategic approaches to ecumenical and inter-religious engagement; and promoting greater integration by examining the interconnections among disparate factors and issues, and giving priority to effective collaboration among vertical and horizontal levels, and different sectors of the Catholic community*

### **Introduction**

Catholic peacebuilding has many incarnations (Omondi & Kaulema, 2014). In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Catholic bishops were widely considered the last best hope as they tried for six months to mediate and implement a political settlement between the government and the political opposition. The bishops finally abandoned the effort in March 2017 after an impasse which they blamed principally on the government. In January 2017, the South Sudan Council of Churches launched an Action Plan for Peace, based on three pillars: advocacy, creating neutral forums for dialogue, and reconciliation (Ashworth, 2017). In June, on-going violence forced Pope Francis to postpone a planned visit to South Sudan, a visit many hoped would catalyze new prospects for peace, as his earlier visit to the Central African Republic (CAR) did. The pope's visit to CAR contributed to the efforts of Sant' Egidio, the lay Catholic community renowned for its role in negotiating the 1992 Mozambique accord, to mediate a peace accord in June 2017 between the CAR government and 13 of the 14 armed groups in the country. A week later, the CAR bishops' justice and peace commission submitted 5,285 dossiers on crimes committed during the conflict to the Special Criminal Court for Central Africa. In Burundi, a priest heads the official truth and reconciliation commission and, until recently, a fellow priest led the official human rights commission. In Gulu, Uganda, the Acholi religious leaders had an official role in facilitating the peace negotiations between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army while Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe was working at the other end of the peacebuilding pyramid, founding the Saint Monica Girls' Tailoring Center to serve girls and young women, many of whom were traumatized as child soldiers and sex slaves of the notorious Lord's Resistance Army (Garsd & Crossan, 2017). In Nigeria, Church leaders have called for, among other things, more responsible military action; legal action against religious leaders inciting violence; efforts to reintegrate former rebels into society; and rosary campaigns in response to Boko Haram (Johnson, 2017; Catholic News Agency, 2016).

This montage is a small sample of the broad spectrum of activities, wide variety of actors, and diverse elements of Catholic beliefs and teachings that must come together for the Catholic community to fulfill its mission as a Peacebuilding Church. This essay focuses on three dimensions of what I call Integral Catholic Peacebuilding: (1) the need for greater emphasis on the vocation of peacebuilding, especially the lay apostolate; (2) the need to be clear about what is

distinctive about Catholic peacebuilding while also being inclusive in pursuing more effective approaches to inter-religious peacebuilding; and (3) the need to give greater priority to peacebuilding that is integrated across issues, levels, and sectors.

### **Peacebuilding as Vocation**

A Peacebuilding Church is grounded in the conviction that peacebuilding is not optional but is integral to our Christian vocation and, therefore, central to the mission of the Church. This sense of vocation and mission gives faith-based peacebuilding a depth and texture that is distinct from most secular approaches. Understanding the dynamics of conflict, training in conflict resolution skills, education to change attitudes, and developing strategies of social change are essential. But, frankly, some of this work sometimes looks and feels a bit like "drive-by" peacebuilding. What motivates and sustains Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe, the Acholi religious leaders, Sant'Egidio's mediation team in CAR, and countless other peacebuilders around the world is a deeper sense of vocation or mission.

The bishops of Africa understood this when they chose justice, reconciliation and peace as the theme of the African Synod. In his post-synodal exhortation, *Africae Munus*, Pope Benedict (2011) emphasized the link between faith, evangelization, and peacebuilding:

Christians will thus become peacemakers (cf. *Mt 5:9*) to the extent that, grounded in divine grace, they cooperate with their Maker in creating and fostering the gift of peace. As reconciled men and women, the faithful will also promote justice everywhere, especially in African societies divided and threatened by violence and war, yet hungering and thirsting for true justice.... Open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit who continues to awaken different charisms in the Church, Christians must pursue or undertake with determination the path of holiness, and thus increasingly become apostles of reconciliation, justice and peace. (paras 170-171)

This common Christian vocation of peacebuilding is lived out through a wide variety of charisms. For bishops and priests, peacebuilding is an integral part of their roles as prophets, teachers, and pastors. A pastoral message of the Catholic Bishops of South Sudan (2017) exemplifies this understanding of their mission. Echoing Pope Benedict (2011) on the role of the Church – “For the sake of Christ ... she feels the duty to be present wherever human suffering exists and to make heard the silent cry of the innocent who suffer persecution” (para. 30) – the bishops message was intended “to reassure you that we are aware of your situation, to make your voice known to the world, ... [and] to give you hope and courage” (Catholic Bishops of South Sudan, 2017). An analysis of the Church in Sudan’s peacebuilding efforts offers a nuanced understanding of the Church’s role. According to this analysis, Church leaders were “peacebearers” as much as they were “peacebuilders”:

Church leaders did not consider themselves to be ‘peacebuilders.’ They considered themselves pastors and shepherds, whose first obligation was to reflect Christ’s fidelity to the Church through their own fidelity to the people. As pastors, they created and sustained communities of faith that could absorb suffering, embody forgiveness and reconciliation, maintain hope, and advocate for justice. As shepherds, they gave voice to the voiceless and spoke truth to power. (Ashworth, et al., 2014, p. 241)

As an “alternative space” amidst conflict, the Church provides humanitarian aid not as a

social service agency but as a form of accompaniment of the poor and suffering. The Church is a community of care whose presence amidst violence can absorb suffering and sustain eschatological hope because of its theology of the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection (Ashworth, et al., 2014, p. 242).

This broad understanding of the Church's mission of peacebuilding is a counter to what Pope Benedict (2011) warned is "the potential for withdrawal or evasion present in a theological and spiritual speculation which could serve as an escape from concrete historical responsibility" (para. 17). But it comes with another warning to the clergy and the institutional church: avoid "direct engagement in politics" (Benedict, 2011, para. 17). In many cases, such as Burundi, South Sudan, and Congo, where the Church is one of the only functioning and widely respected civil society institutions and the laity is not well educated, priests and bishops are thrust into substitute political roles in official commissions on truth and reconciliation, human rights, elections, or constitutional reform. Because these roles are inherently political, church leaders sometimes decline to accept them. When they do take on these substitute political roles, they must walk a tightrope between the religious and the political. This kind of direct political engagement by church leaders can be necessary and effective in the short-term. But it always carries the risk of politicizing religion and clericalizing peacebuilding.

These risks only reinforce the importance of doing much more to revive the lay apostolate. Lay Catholics are meant to be the vanguard of a Peacebuilding Church because, "as 'ambassadors of Christ' (2 Cor. 5:20) in the public sphere" (Benedict, 2011, para. 128), they have the principal responsibility for transforming the social order in light of the gospel through their work, family, and civic engagement (Second Vatican Council, 1965, para. 42). As then Archbishop John Onaiyekan of Nigeria has said, "As a bishop, I have always understood that peacebuilding is central to my ministry.... [but] the front lines of peacebuilding will mostly be occupied by lay people" (Onaiyekan, 2010, p. vii). Unfortunately, too often the laity are the missing dimension of Catholic peacebuilding. In 2012, the six national and two regional episcopal conferences in the Great Lakes Region issued a strategic plan for peace and reconciliation. They bemoaned the fact that the Church continued to be hamstrung by deficiencies in evangelization identified by the African bishops in 1994: "We have not always done what we could in order to form the laity for life in society, to a Christian vision of politics and economics. A protracted absence of the lay faithful from this field has led them to believe that the faith has nothing to do with politics" (Catholic Episcopate of Great Lakes Region, 2010, quoting Synod of Bishops (1994), para. 33).<sup>2</sup> Deploring "the grave and culpable opposition imposed between the life of faith and the style of daily life," the bishops of the Great Lakes Region (2010) concluded that action to promote peace and reconciliation required finding "the language and methods which are necessary to form communities in an active faith which brings about a social and political revival" (p. 3).

In other words, the Church must have a well-formed laity, grounded in peaceable virtues; a Christian community that personifies a certain kind of character – one that is "habitually disposed to love and seeks justice for their neighbors as if such a disposition were a second nature" (Bell, 2009, p. 83; NCCB, 1993, p. 6). Small Christian Communities (SCCs) have a fundamental role to play in forming these communities of conscience (Benedict, 2011, para. 131; Healy & Hinton, 2005, pp. 99-116). So, too, do lay Catholic organizations like Focolare and Sant'Egidio, which has become the poster child for Track 2 diplomacy. The Church desperately

needs a proliferation of such lay communities for whom peacebuilding is a central part of their faith.

In the face of the strong tendency among some Catholics and the wider society to separate faith from public life and to dismiss religion as mostly a cause of conflict and division, peacebuilding must be rooted in a strong sense of Christian vocation and mission. The collaboration and unity needed for effective and authentic Catholic peacebuilding also requires clarity about clerical and lay charisms, with much greater priority given to the lay vocation as an essential component of Catholic peacebuilding.

### **Distinctive and Inclusive**

If peacebuilding is integral to the Christian vocation and the Church's mission, is there anything distinctive about Catholic peacebuilding? If so, how can the Church cultivate its distinctiveness while also being a peacebuilder amidst communal and political divisions rooted in religious, ideological and other identity conflicts?

### ***Catholic distinctiveness***

Catholic social teaching uses two distinct methods to address two distinct but overlapping audiences. Teaching addressed to Catholics emphasizes the biblical conception of peace, the centrality of peace in the Church's sacraments and mission, and a distinctively Christian theological and ethical approach to war and peace. Teaching addressed to the wider community uses the natural law tradition, which presumes that the demands of justice and peace are knowable and binding on all persons, regardless of their faith commitments or lack thereof. While the Church considers these two approaches to be complementary, others consider an emphasis on what is distinctively Christian and Catholic as sectarian and thus an impediment to peace, while still others dispute the universality of the natural law tradition. Clearly, Catholic approaches to peacebuilding must be inclusive, respectfully engaging other faith traditions and the wider society. But if peacebuilding is truly a Christian vocation and is to be truly effective, the Catholic community should not hide under the proverbial bushel what it brings to the peacebuilding puzzle. Catholics should not be shy or defensive about what is distinctive about faith-based peacebuilding, in general, and Catholic peacebuilding, in particular. (Note: what is "distinctive" does not necessarily mean "unique," but only a notable characteristic.)

Two examples illustrate the importance of recognizing and nurturing what is distinctive about Christian and Catholic peacebuilding. First, as noted earlier, secular notions of mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution do not adequately explain the Church's involvement in the kind of Track Two diplomacy done by Sant'Egidio, the Acholi Religious Leaders, and the Church in South Sudan and the DRC. The centerpiece of the Church's program of civic education, logistical support, and monitoring for the 2011 independence referendum in South Sudan was "101 Days of Prayer for Peace." When religious leaders were selected to play a leading role in the government's reconciliation commission after independence, they made it clear that they considered the process to be ultimately about religious, not just political, reconciliation. In 2017, as South Sudan suffered through a deepening civil war, the bishops of Sudan (2017) urged a return to the spiritual mobilization undertaken prior to the referendum, insisting that "technical" programmes are not enough." John Paul Lederach, a noted Mennonite peacebuilder who has worked extensively with the Catholic Church in conflict zones, points out

that a local pastor in a rural village in Uganda or Colombia reaches out to a local rebel leader not as a mediator or even a peacebuilder but as a pastor who accompanies both the victims and perpetrators of violence (Lederach, 2010, p. 52).

That pastoral approach is closely related to a second distinctive aspect of Catholic peacebuilding: the centrality of prayer, ritual, and sacraments (Schreiter, 2010). In communities divided by conflict, a pastor might offer to hear the confession of a paramilitary leader who has committed egregious crimes, or invoke the Eucharist as a call and grace for a parish torn asunder by violent conflict to rise to the challenge of healing and reconciliation. According to Ashworth, et al. (2014):

Creating spaces for personal and communal reconciliation through prayer and ritual and proclaiming the certainty that God is doing something new in the face of death and destruction ... are important ways in which the Church in Sudan maintained hope amidst hopelessness. It is this ability to be a place where both people of hope and people in need of hope gather that most distinguishes the Church from other well-meaning NGOs. (p. 245)

Lederach adds that the Church's sacramental tradition, particularly the Eucharist, "stands as an important, perhaps unique, contribution of the Catholic tradition" because of its role in reconciling individuals and communities (Lederach, 2010, p. 51). The Synod of Bishops (2009) makes a similar point about the personal and communal dimensions of the sacrament of reconciliation as a "primary resource" and an essential contribution to healing individuals and divided communities, and promoting peace (propositions 5, 7, 8, 9). Ashworth, et al. (2014) conclude that the "value added" that the Church in Sudan brought amidst a host of well-funded and powerful actors from NGOs to the UN was its ability to bring about "transformation, metanoia" (p. 14).

Nurturing what is distinctive about Christian and Catholic peacebuilding – e.g., the pastoral approach to dealing with armed actors and the sacramental tradition – is not about triumphalism, exclusivity, or parochialism. It is about plumbing the spiritual, theological, and pastoral depths of Catholic peacebuilding so that lived Catholicism is animated by a vocation of peacebuilding that allows the Church to make her most authentic and effective contribution to the world's wider peacebuilding project.

### ***Inclusive interreligious peacebuilding***<sup>3</sup>

Being authentically Catholic includes, of course, being "small c" catholic. The Church is not a sect, nor is it sectarian. In the words of *Africae Munus*, "peace in Africa, as elsewhere, is conditioned by interreligious relations. Hence it is important for the Church to promote dialogue as a spiritual disposition, so that believers may learn to work together, for example in associations for justice and peace, in a spirit of trust and mutual help" (Benedict, 2011, para. 88). The Synod of Bishops (2009) adds that this dialogue "will be authentic and productive to the extent that each religion begins from the depths of its faith and encounters the other in truth and openness" (proposition 11).

Interreligious and ecumenical dialogue and action have been a hallmark of Catholic peacebuilding from South Sudan and Sierra Leone to Nigeria and northern Uganda. These and other efforts bear the most abundant fruit when they are clear about how the theory of change

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underlying particular interreligious initiatives relates to the nature of the conflict. Four theories of change are usually at work in interreligious engagement. Affective theories focus on (1) building and deepening relationships across deeply-divided societies by providing a safe space for those from conflicting sides to come together; and (2) changing the hearts and minds of participants about the conflict and each other. The more ambitious social and political purposes include (3) promoting cultural change by overcoming sectarian stereotypes and building a culture of peace; and (4) promoting programs or policy changes that further the common good, such as relief and development initiatives, mediating peace processes, or promoting democratization (Neufeldt, 2011). It is important to note, here, that, with the exception of the first, each of these theories of change can be achieved through common action or complementary action – and, in most cases, a combination of the two is required. Examples of common action are the joint Catholic-Muslim “connector projects” supported by Catholic Relief Services. These projects integrate interreligious action into development or human rights programs that serve the whole community. The theory is that by working together, Catholics and Muslims will better understand and develop more positive attitudes towards each other, which will lead to a greater willingness to collaborate for the common good (Ramadhan, 2017). Complementary action typically arises out of interreligious engagement but rather than prioritizing common joint action, the focus is on what Catholics and Muslims can do on their own within their respective communities to change attitudes and strengthen peace and reconciliation efforts.

Several issues arise in interreligious peacebuilding. First, with the exception of some elements of the fourth strategy for change – e.g., responding to crises, mediating in peace processes, and pursuing specific policy initiatives – these strategies are long-term and difficult-to-measure, and thus easily dismissed as irrelevant. Gopin (2000) argues, however, that conflict resolution strategies, which tend to be crisis-driven and problem-focused, limit the creative potential of religion because religion is most effective when dealing with long-term cultural change (p. 62). That long-term change, of course, is only possible if inter-religious peacebuilding involves long-term, sustained engagement across the timeline of conflict, from before violence erupts to well after it is over.

Second, interreligious peacebuilding often suffers from a paradox: the more religion is central to a conflict, the greater the need for interreligious peacebuilding; the less religion is central to the conflict, the greater the likelihood that interreligious peacebuilding will bear fruit. Some of the most effective cases of interreligious peacebuilding are in places like northern Uganda and South Sudan, where religion plays a central role in society but is not central to the conflict. In these cases, interreligious peacebuilding can be effective for the simple reason that it is easier to find common ground on issues at stake in the conflict and religious actors can more easily bring an “empathetic detachment” that comes with their moral credibility and impartiality (Little, 2007, p. 440).

Conflicts with a religious dimension, such as in northern Nigeria or Mali, are usually less about differences in religious beliefs and more about the complex interaction of religious, tribal, ethnic, and national identities. Clearly, when religion is being used or manipulated to deepen communal conflict, interreligious engagement is essential to overcome mistrust and misunderstandings, to deepen relationships that can bridge the communal divide, and to take at least symbolic common actions to counter the extremists who preach religious conflict. But these efforts can readily

dissolve into least-common-denominator approaches to peacebuilding that paper over the most pressing issues that divide communities and necessarily downplay the distinctive aspects of faith that motivate and inspire people to be peacebuilders (Appleby, 2000; Gopin, 2000, pp. 63-64). In these cases, the fruit of interreligious engagement might not be common action but what the coming together allows each to do within their own community. Interreligious engagement enables participants to go back and work within their own community to help it break out of its myths of unique victimization; to counter stereotypes and prejudices; and to promote better understanding and respect for the hopes, fears and legitimate grievances of the other community. Complementary action, where community members do work within their own communities, not common action, is sometimes the most effective form of interreligious peacebuilding.

Third, as essential and effective as it can be, interreligious peacebuilding is not a substitute for intrareligious peacebuilding. Interreligious peacebuilding requires significant time and resources that might better be used mobilizing one's own community for peace. Peacebuilding within one's own community can draw on the full complement of a tradition's rituals, beliefs, norms, spirituality, and communal identity, which is not possible even in the most effective interreligious peacebuilding. Extremists within a religious tradition will most likely be marginalized, not because the moderates are engaged in interreligious initiatives, but because the moderates can appeal to this rich set of religious resources to convince their co-religionists that extremism is antithetical to their tradition. In short, interreligious peacebuilding is not an alternative to interreligious dialogue and intrareligious action but is a "reshaped paradigm" inclusive of both (Omer, 2017, p. 19).

In addition to the obvious need for a sustained commitment of resources and cultivation of peacebuilding skills and strategies, effective Catholic peacebuilding requires clarity about one's mission and distinctive contribution, as well as an inclusive approach that is clear about its theory of change based on a sophisticated understanding of conflict dynamics. But more is needed for the Church to get her own house in order: an integral approach.

### **Integration, Integration, Integration**

The Church plays a significant role in peacebuilding when it integrates three elements of what political scientists call "soft power": 1) its rituals, spiritualities, theology, and social teaching; 2) the "people power" of some billion Catholic faithful around the world; and 3) its enormous institutional capacity. The integral relationship among the Church's teachings on peace, faith-filled peacebuilders, and the programs of a wide variety of institutions together make Catholic peacebuilding a living and effective peacebuilding tradition.

Three types of integration are particularly important: integration of different elements of Church teaching; horizontal and vertical integration of Church action; and integration of different sectors of the Church.

### ***Issue integration***

Catholic social teaching provides a rich, comprehensive approach to the normative foundations for a just, peaceful and sustainable order. The annual World Day of Peace Messages exemplify the breadth of issues addressed as well as the ways in which Catholic social teaching recognizes the connections among diverse issues, a connection highlighted by the refrains, if you want

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peace, work for justice... respect religious freedom... promote sustainable development... and so on. This teaching presumes an inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach that runs counter to the tendency toward every-increasing specialization in academia and the professions, the ever-increasing demands of funders for “evidence-based” metrics, as well as the tendency of some peacebuilding programs and advocacy campaigns to focus on one issue or one aspect of an issue in the name of effectiveness. A challenge for Catholic peacebuilders is not to shrink from addressing the full complexity of problems and to remain true to the wisdom of Catholic social teaching by taking an integrative approach to issues. Stand-alone, focused peacebuilding initiatives, such as the campaign to ban landmines or the DRC bishops’ efforts to mediate a political settlement, are essential. But many issues demand a more complex, multi-focal integrative approach that views issues through multiple lenses: peacebuilding, human rights, sustainable development, sacramental theology, and the like.

The problem of good governance is illustrative. Since the end of the Cold War, most violent conflicts are intra-state not inter-state. These internal conflicts are often less about ideology and more about failed or failing states riven by identity conflicts fomented and manipulated by cynical, power-hungry politicians. According to the *World Development Report* (2011), states with weak institutions run the greatest risk of civil war, uncontrolled criminal violence, and endemic poverty (p. 84). Throughout Africa, the Church has identified governance as a principal peacebuilding challenge. In a major statement prior to the Kenyan elections in 2017, the bishops reiterated their long-standing concerns about “entrenched corruption, ...[a] virus [that] seems to thrive and perpetuate itself without shame or fear... [and which] has taken a big toll on the economy, food security, education, health sector, governance, security, employment and access to basic needs by the vast majority of Kenyans” (Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017, para. 13). Similarly, the Catholic Episcopate of the Great Lakes Region (2010) decried the problems of governance:

Bad governance ... reveals itself in the veritable absence of a just State. Electoral processes are often marred by irregularities. The policies in place in most of our countries promote social inequalities and deprive the people of basic infrastructures. Human rights are violated with impunity and corruption has become endemic almost everywhere. (p. 7)

In 1999, then Archbishop John Onaiyekan (2008) of Nigeria explained:

The tragedy of the African continent today is that many of our leaders refer back to and claim the powers that our traditional societies gave to rulers without accepting or respecting any of the checks and balances of the spiritual limitations to the exercise of those powers. (p. 188)

These prophetic denunciations are appropriate exercises of episcopal leadership. But the Church is not content with moral denunciations of bad governance; its teaching and action also can contribute to good governance. Catholic social teaching does not purport to offer a blueprint for the political realm, but a good deal of the teaching, notably *Gaudium et Spes* and *Pacem in Terris*, has offered a moral framework for good governance. What is important about this moral framework is how capacious it is. It includes first principles that must govern political authorities – such as truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom. It includes a notion of integral human development that includes but goes well beyond the full array of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights enshrined in international human rights law. And it includes detailed

teaching on subsidiarity, distributive justice, and sustainable development. It envisions further development of international law and institutions to deal with problems of an increasingly interdependent world which are beyond the capacity of individual nations to address, even when acting in concert. With such a broad and detailed moral framework, it is obvious that an effective approach to good governance requires an integrated approach to issues. Catholic Relief Services came to the same conclusion in a recent evaluation of its good governance programs, noting that economic development, humanitarian relief, conflict prevention, and poverty reduction are interlinked (CRS, 2017). Given the multiple, inter-connected issues involved in good governance, the Church's engagement must be equally broad and integrated, ranging from civic education programs about responsible citizenship; election monitoring; mediating political conflicts; serving on constitutional commissions and truth and reconciliation commissions; advocating around a wide range of policy issues; and, through development agencies, supporting efforts to strengthen local governance.

***Horizontal and vertical integration:***

The Catholic Church is, perhaps, the most vertically-integrated religious institution, with a clearly-defined hierarchical structure. The Church is also a major transnational actor, which gives it enormous capacity for horizontal integration. Vertical and horizontal integration are both a practical necessity of effective peacebuilding and an imperative of Catholic ecclesiology. They give the Church a capacity to address conflicts at all levels, and across cultural and geo-political divides. They also enable the Church to maintain a proper balance between the deeply-embedded ties to cultural, ethnic and national identities that give religion its influence in particular conflict situations, and the cosmopolitan or universal elements which give religion its moral credibility and transnational reach.

The strategic plan of the episcopal conferences of the Great Lakes Region (2010) is a prime example of the importance of integration of these levels. The bishops' read the signs of the times and concluded that the interlocking conflicts in the region, which cut across national borders and involve international dimensions, required a more coordinated response – a “synergy of action” – by the six national and two regional episcopal conferences, in collaboration with the Holy See and the Church in countries with influence in the region. That is why the three-year effort to develop the strategic plan included not only episcopal conferences in the region but also the Holy See, the conference of episcopal conferences of Africa (SECAM), Caritas Internationalis, Catholic Relief Services, Misereor, the U.S. bishops' conference, and the Catholic Peacebuilding Network. Their long-standing peacebuilding efforts at the national level, and even those of the two regional episcopal conferences, were not adequate to the challenge posed by the nature of the conflicts in the region. Moreover, quoting the Synod of Bishops (2009), they highlighted the pastoral and ecclesiological importance of this synergy of action: “the Synod reminds us that ‘the Church is a communion which brings about an organic, pastoral solidarity’” (Catholic Episcopate of Great Lakes Region, 2010, p. 1, quoting proposition 3). This communion is manifested in the Church's fundamental mission to promote unity among all peoples, unity within the Church, and effective and affective collegiality among bishops at the national, regional, continental and international levels.

The strategic plan called for a number of practical actions to enhance episcopal solidarity around peace and reconciliation work, including creating a new secretariat to coordinate joint action;

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more regional exchanges; joint advocacy at the regional level; developing strategies for dealing with the impact of the conflicts in Sudan and CAR on the region; and strengthening their solidarity with sister churches from other regions of Africa and from other continents.

Implementing these and other aspects of the strategic plan have been hindered by the difficulties of communicating and engaging in underdeveloped, conflicted areas; the challenge of developing long-term strategies amidst on-going crises that readily consume limited time and resources; the lack of consensus on specific issues, which is exacerbated by ethnic and national divisions; and the practical challenges of dealing with ecclesial structures, such as ACEAC and AMECEA, whose mandates do not necessarily coincide with the boundaries of conflicts. These difficulties notwithstanding, it is notable that the bishops have clearly recognized the need to break out of geographical silos and the isolation that conflicts greatly exacerbate, and to take full advantage of the Church's presence at all levels and across the landscape of conflict to more effectively address the multiple dimensions of complex conflicts.

### ***Cross-sectoral integration***

One of the areas where the strategic plan has led to concrete new initiatives relates to a second kind of integration: cross-sectoral integration. The Church consists of a wide variety of institutions and organizations with a common faith commitment but particular charisms (1 Cor. 12). The most effective and authentically Catholic peacebuilding takes place when these diverse actors with their diverse charisms escape their comfortable silos and find ways to collaborate. Collaboration allows essential cross-fertilization as well as increases the likelihood that the Catholic community can respond in the many ways necessary to adequately address complex problems of peace.

The Great Lakes strategic plan recognized the need for more effective cross-sectoral integration among Catholic universities and between universities and the institutional church in order to strengthen its institutional capacity to work on peace and reconciliation. Several important initiatives have emerged since this call for greater cross-sectoral integration. One that predated the strategic plan but had similar objectives was the launch, in November 2010, of the Cardinal Martino Pan African Institute in Kinshasa. A direct follow up to the strategic plan was ACEAC's decision to found a new peace institute in eastern DRC, an area that has been at the heart of the conflicts in the region. The Higher Institute for Peace and Reconciliation at the Catholic University of Bukavu is scheduled to begin a master's in peace studies in Fall 2017. The founding of these and other similar institutes and programs coincide with a more concerted effort by individual universities and the Association of Catholic Universities and Institutes of Africa and Madagascar to strengthen existing peace and justice programs, establish new ones, and, perhaps most importantly, integrate peace studies and Catholic social teaching across the curriculum. After devoting much of its 2012 meeting to efforts to improve programs on peace, in 2014, the Association approved a detailed plan for doing so. As part of that plan, in November 2017, the Association is teaming up with Hekima College, the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, and a half dozen universities and development agencies from North America and Europe for the first convening of Catholic peace institutes from throughout Africa.

These university initiatives are important for cross-sectoral integration because many of them serve the wider Church and society through certificate programs for working professionals, trainings for Church personnel, applied research that informs caritas program development and

peace and justice advocacy, and various efforts to engage pressing policy issues.

To call for greater issue, horizontal and vertical, and cross-sectoral integration might sound banal. But the failure to take an integrative approach is one of the original sins of peacebuilding, one of the greatest impediments to the ability of the Catholic Church to deploy effectively its rich beliefs and teaching, people power and institutions in the service of peace. If you want peace, integrate, integrate, integrate.

### **Conclusion**

The introduction to this article offered a litany of examples of Catholic peacebuilding in Africa, a tiny subset of a mostly unheralded and under-analyzed phenomenon of Catholic peacebuilding on the continent and around the world. Among the many under-examined aspects of this lived Catholicism are its ecclesiological and practical dimensions. This article has suggested that an Integral Catholic Peacebuilding requires that more be done to deepen the Catholic community's commitment to peacebuilding as a vocation, especially by reinvigorating the lay vocation; to cultivate distinctively Catholic approaches to peacebuilding while engaging inclusively, especially through strategic approaches to ecumenical and interreligious engagement; and to promote greater integration by examining the interconnections among disparate factors and issues, and giving priority to effective collaboration among vertical and horizontal levels, and different sectors of the Catholic community. This article has not addressed pressing substantive issues – such as conflict resources or the conflict between peace, justice, human rights and reconciliation that arise in so many peace accords – and the further development in Catholic social ethics and creative peacebuilding practices needed to address them. But attention to the ecclesiology of peacebuilding is essential as the Catholic community continually seeks to be ever more the Peacebuilding Church Jesus calls it to be.

### **Endnotes**

1. This essay draws on the following articles: Powers, G. (2012). From an ethics of war to an ethics of peacebuilding. In Justenhoven, H.G., & Barbieri, W. (Eds.). *From just war to modern peace ethics* (pp. 275-312). Berlin: de Gruyter; Powers, G. (2014). Catholic peacebuilding. In Sullivan, S., & Pagnucco, R. (Eds.). *A Vision of justice: Engaging Catholic social teaching on the college campus* (pp. 113-137). Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. © 2014 by Order of Saint Benedict. Used with permission.
2. This conference included delegates of the national episcopal conferences of Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as of the two regional episcopal conferences, ACEAC and AMECEA; in the two years after the conferences, each episcopal conference separately approved the plan.
3. This section is based on a longer treatment of ecumenical and interreligious peacebuilding in Powers, G. (2010). Religion and peacebuilding. In Philpott, D., & Powers, G., *Strategies of peace: Transforming conflict in a violent world* (pp. 317-352). New York: Oxford University Press.

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