

BREAKING DOWN WALLS IN OUR GLOBALIZED SOCIETY: A RELEVANT ECUMENISM

By Elsa Tamez

What is Ecumenism? What are today's challenges in a globalized society to live a relevant Ecumenism? How does Ecumenism work today? What does the Word teach us? Specifically how can we Christians be genuinely ecumenical?

We cannot answer any of these questions if we do not look carefully at the context of globalization and the Christian churches. This must be our starting point for reflecting about a relevant Ecumenism and for proposing concrete practices for ecumenical living experiences. In this address I am going to speak first about the social and religious context. Second, I will try to offer some thoughts about how to live ecumenically in a globalized world. And third, I would like to finish with a prayer to God based on the letter to the Ephesians. I will not be speaking on inter-religious dialogue but only the ecumenical dialogue within Christianity.

A Globalized Society and a Global Church as the First Act of Reflection

1) The Change of an Era and the Crisis of our Globalized Society

The Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church on Ecumenism affirms that the opening of dialogue that was happening between the Christian Churches was turned back with the so called "change of an era. According to this group "they renewed their loyalties to their confessional identities" (JWG, 2005).

As we know, what is called the "change of era" happened since the fall of the Berlin wall. It is curious, when the wall fell, distrust deepened between the churches, and discouraged dialogue. It was always hoped that, with the fall of the wall, societies would become reconciled or at least

become closer. But this was not the case either between the churches or between the peoples. To the contrary, other walls were constructed between the North and South. What happened between the churches is a reflection of what has happened in today's society since the fall of the wall. The reason, as we know, is due to the disappearance of the bi-polar forces of the Cold War, giving way for one force that gained hegemony over the globe, imposing one Western Christian culture; one economic system: neoliberal capitalism, the so called "free market"; one language: English; one form of knowledge: Cartesian. It did not take long for people's reaction: the reaffirmation of cultural identities, resurgence of ancestral identities, representation and growth of non-Christian religions, and paradigm and framework crisis. The world finally showed what it is: diverse, and with the right of all to exist with dignity and to be different.

This is very positive, because it challenges all of us to reconsider everything, starting from "the other" and our diversity. But at the same time a negative side appears with fanatics and fundamentalists. And here I am referring to the fundamentalism of Christians as well as Muslims who have not been able to understand the right to be different in questions of culture and religion. Some are on the defensive when confronted with the force of an economic, cultural, and religious hegemony, and there are others who support the imposition of this hegemonic force. The situation, instead of becoming better after the fall of the wall, has become worse. The degrading war that is lived in Iraq is the most visible sign.

But the problem is not the affirmation of identities nor renewed loyalty to one's own confession. To the contrary, the diversity is what has unmasked the western cultural hegemony. The root of the problem is the globalized economic hegemony of neoliberal politics that has been recognized since the end of the 80's; an unsustainable neoliberal market, that has been recognized since the end of the 90s, and that has collapsed in crisis in these last months in the United States, as has been recognized since the beginning of this XXI century. It is now beginning to affect those countries "hooked" on these neoliberal policies.

Analysts speak of the worst economic crisis in history, worse than any since the depression of the 30's. (Dierckxsens, 2008). Middle classes are suffering (the poor have always suffered): alarming unemployment, housing evictions, and hunger. What many poor of the world, including

the poor in the U.S., have been living, because of this system is now extending to the middle classes of the United States and the world.

But, because the disappearance of the bi-polar forces has made visible the world's diversity as an opportunity to reconsider new paradigms and dialogues, so also the collapse of the economic system presents an opportunity to reconsider new forms of economic and life style relationships. If we want to save this same system, then we can foresee more wars (*ibid.*, 40ff).

This collapse of the neoliberal system is like an earthquake. The Salvadoran Jesuit, Jon Sobrino, thinking of the 2001 Salvadoran earthquake, affirmed that "the earthquake is not only a tragedy, but an x-ray of the country" (2003, 30). We can say the same thing about the collapse of the neoliberal market society. It shows us the truth. It is an x-ray of the globalized world, characterized by the accumulation and consumption of the few rich in detriment of the millions and millions of persons concentrated in what we have not been able to stop calling, the Third World. Sobrino repeats many times the shameful fact that 20% of the people in the world consume 80% of the wealth of the whole world (UNPD, 2005). We and our rich churches are among these persons. The deceased theologian Hugo Assmann said that any theology, that does not take into account the scandal of poverty, becomes a cynical theology. Therefore, to talk about a relevant ecumenism, we cannot ignore this reality, to do so, is to fall into the sin of cynicism.

Sobrino shows that the x-ray of society, seen in the earthquakes, also reveals something human: that which reflects the most human of the human being: solidarity with those who suffer. Not unconcerned help that soon forgets the catastrophe, but the solidarity that is born because people allow themselves to become affected by the suffering of the other. I also wish to speak of this when reflecting about a relevant ecumenism that tears down walls.

2) Global Christianity

Philip Jenkins in his book *The Next Christendom* says that the face of Christianity will change radically by the middle of this century, that is to say in 40 years. His prediction is based on the

surprising growth of Christianity, this against all prognosis of secular analysts who said that Christianity was going to disappear (Jenkins, 2002, 9). This expansion, according to Jenkins, does not come from the Protestant or Catholic churches but from the independent churches, many of them Pentecostals (60).

On the other hand, this growth is not happening in the North but in the South. For example, based on the author's data, one fourth of all the world's Christians, including the Copts, live in Africa. In regard to Protestants, a population traditionally numerous in the North, today two thirds of Protestants live outside of Europe and United States, principally in the South (37). For this reason, Jenkins dares to say that soon the two most important centers of Christianity will be in two southern continents: Africa and Latin America. For now, according to the author, they live as if they were two different planets (12), because there is little relationship between the two. The South-South relationships happen today when there are global dialogues convened by the North with Northern agendas. But this could change if a sense of identity emerges among the Christians of the South. This could happen because of the context that unites them: poverty, race, and enculturation. If this happens, then we could speak of a Christianity based in the South. (12).

Three problems can be seen as challenges to Ecumenism from this global perspective. First, for those of us who make a contextual theology that critique the unjust social structures and is done from the option of the excluded, cannot get too enthusiastic about Jenkins' prognosis. According to him, the churches that grow are not like the Christian Base Communities, but independent churches, with more conservative theology, politics and morality.

Secondly, many of their postulates or forms of expressing their faith can be very strange to the tradition which is familiar to us in the North and among Catholics, Protestants of the Reformation, and Orthodox churches. That is, the churches with modern and rational thought. Jenkins believes that the theological and practical implications will deepen the differences. This is obvious when he offers us some examples of the three southern continents. In Africa, the worship of ancestors is common and animal sacrifice within the church service is not unusual. In Latin America, the same as Africa, prophesy, healing miracles, visions, and spiritual warfare are

practices that are becoming more and more common. In Asia, there are practices closer to Judaism than Christianity, such as the churches in Ethiopia and Armenia, which continue being Monophysites since their birth in the first centuries, in spite of the fact that they were considered heretics at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 (18f).

Third, church expansion is growing, together with Islam, which also is expanding in Nigeria, Indonesia, Sudan and the Philippines, both Christians and Muslims with a missionary attitude to win more believers. For Jenkins, this situation can provoke serious conflicts because the religious fervor of both religions could easily turn into fanaticism. The author states this very strongly, "Such struggles might well provoke civil wars, which could in turn become international conflicts." He does not rule out religious wars similar to those in the Middle Ages, such as the Christian Crusades and the Muslim Jihads.

How do we speak of a relevant Ecumenism with these two global situations which confront us today? The times are urgent, what is seen above about society and Christianity give a prognosis of more wars if there is no change to other directions, be they religious wars and/or wars to maintain the economy and a strong dollar. We know that the origin is the same: economic and cultural globalization, not globalization itself, but the globalization of neoliberal economic policies. This has generated an exorbitant social inequality that pushes the poor to emigrate for better living conditions and also has generated the discrimination of "the others" who become more visible and strange when they arrive at the gates of those countries which present more opportunities. The wrong solution has been the construction of walls by the rich countries in various parts of the world.

But we have an advantage: the free market society is in crisis, which provides an opportunity for honest economists and world leaders to rethink not only a just change in the economic order, but also for us to experiment a new way to live and to interrelate, with less consumption and more solidarity. And if Jenkins has shown us the new face of global Christianity for the future, what could be more gratifying than to better the world and to mutually come together. We have then, the opportunity to reorient our thinking, attitudes and actions toward an ecumenism that focuses precisely to confront that challenge.

Relevant Ecumenism

What We Have

Today, there are various important ecumenical organization at the global level. The largest and most inclusive is the World Council of Churches, made up of 349 Protestant and Orthodox churches in more than 110 countries, with Catholic observers sent by the Vatican. The Catholic Church, the largest Christian church, has their own commission that promotes Ecumenism: the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. This commission works together with commissions of the WCC and with other international forums concerned for the unity of the churches. In 1967, the Joint Working Group began between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches and is dedicated to working on the nature of ecumenical dialogue. Besides these global dialogues there are bilateral ecumenical dialogues¹. From the Catholic Church there are ecumenical commissions in the Episcopal Conferences. There are also national councils and other organizations². Almost all of these have the objective of better understanding between the churches and the goal of having a visible unity.

We can not deny the invaluable contribution that these groups are making. Their documents are excellent and really, if many of them could be put into practice, it would help to advance the improvement of relationships among Christian Churches and between churches and the world.

But there is a difference between these dialogues among ecclesiastical institutions at a global, regional and national level and what it is really occurring between Christians on the ground, especially those thousands of Christian churches that do not participate in these high level dialogues. When we reflect on Ecumenism in a threatened globalized society, we should see this situation and recognize the advances have been more at the theoretical level or in ivory towers than at a practical level or at the base. The ecumenical retreat has not only to do with the affirmation of identities because of globalization but also because of the fact that there has not

¹ Such as Lutheran World Federation in dialogue with the Vatican or the World Alliance of Reformed Churches with the Vatican.

² The web page of the World Council of Churches shows all the existing ecumenical groups at this time..

been a heartfelt, profound conviction of the importance of ecumenism, and there has been no political will in the institutions to change. To be frank, I believe that ecumenism has been a necessary appendage in the ministry of different churches, large and small, and that, generally, the dialogues we have are among the leaders of church institutions.

I do not want to be skeptical. I recognize that there are highlights and certain advances in relationships thanks to this dialogue; the documents that the scholars and other interested persons have written on ecumenism are very good. I also realize that they are not oblivious to what is happening in the world with respect to Christianity. Even though Jenkins states that the West has not given its attention, the ecumenical movement recognizes that many Christian churches are not at the discussion table about the unity of Christians. Proof of this is the creation of the Global Christian Forum born in 1997 with the purpose of opening up new dialogue with other churches that traditionally have not participated in the discussions on Christian unity. The Forum, besides including traditional ecumenical groups, such as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches, includes Independent and Pentecostal churches³. And lately, in 2004, a committee was formed to go deeper into “Ecumenism in the XXI Century”, precisely in the light of the effects of a changing world⁴. I am sure they are moving in the right direction.

But, I do insist, the way is very slow and the times are urgent. What we have is not sufficient, nor can we remain in dialogues at the level of church leadership. We must take steps toward a profound conviction for each Christian in the world of the importance of ecumenism in our globalized society, and the leaders of our churches must have the political will to reach that understanding.

Those of us who have been present in ecumenical events know the difficulty of dialogue, above all with respect to theological concepts, doctrinal traditions, forms of worship and Sacraments.

³ More recently, 2006, the World Council of Churches created the Joint Consultation Commission (similar to the Joint Working Group of the WCC – Catholic Church), between the WCC and the World Christian Communions. Among the world confessional families represented in the Commission are Anglicans, Disciples of Christ, Orthodox, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Lutherans, Mennonites, Eastern Orthodox, Reformed, and Roman Catholics. Unfortunately, there are no Pentecostal or Independent Churches.

⁴ More information on these organizations can be found on the WCC web page.

The visible unity of the churches that these dialogues aspire to is very far from happening. Will it be possible to reach the objective of visible unity in only one faith and only one Eucharistic communion? Should all efforts be toward this objective? Because of inculturation, in practice, we are rapidly becoming more different. The Global Christian Forum proposes “To create an open space wherein representatives from a broad range of Christian churches and interchurch organizations, which confess the triune God and Jesus Christ as perfect in His divinity and humanity, can gather to foster mutual respect, to explore and address together common challenges”. This forum, whose proposal was to include non-member churches, places boundaries that exclude Christian churches such as those who do not believe in the Trinity but are profound Christians and others whose Christology is not Nestorian (two natures of Christ) but Monophysite, such as the Ethiopia and Armenia churches.

I am not against all these dialogues that search theologically to deepen the meaning of the Apostolic Faith. I believe they should continue, but in taking account of the globalized society, I believe that a better emphasis should point in another direction without leaving behind this kind of dialogue: that of living ecumenically, with the diversity that exists in local expressions and aspire to the invisible church, that is the universal church, based on nothing more than the love of God and neighbor, as was taught by the human face of God – the crucified and resurrected. Visibility is very important for the world to believe, but this visibility, it seems to me, would be more pertinent if we, as Christians, could express this love around the crucified people of the world. This affirmation is very general. I want to explain it in four very simple points.

1) To live ecumenically

The first step is to make ecumenism more than a discussion, make it a way of living. A module about Ecumenism prepared by Dr. Preiswerk (2007) presents what I want to say by “to live ecumenically”. It is written from Bolivia, a very Catholic country but at the same very Aymara and with the presence of not a few Evangelical churches. In fact, ecumenism is an attitude, a way of living with the other, and a way of placing ourselves face to face with the other. It means an attitude of openness in life, in particular, the life of faith and in the recognition of other traditions and spiritualities. This attitude of openness recognizes that faith itself can be enriched

in dialogue, and at the same time we can be challenged in such a dialogue. This supposes, of course, the capacity to listen and dialogue with a heart tuned more than the head. The Joint Working Group of the WCC and the Catholic Church has proposed the same thing in similar words: “Ecumenical dialogue is a way of being, of living the Christian life. It presupposes an ample spirituality open to the other in light of the imperative of the unity of Christians. It is a process of conversion, discernment and of being attentive to the impulse of God” (JWG 2005).

We have to recognize that a firm ecumenical consensus is a long ways away, given the different ecclesiologies and theologies of the persons in dialogue. For this reason we should begin by helping all people to have an open attitude toward the others, their culture and their expression of faith. In this way we can begin breaking down walls of distrust and fanaticism. It is a pedagogical question that should begin with our every day life. We need training programs and accompaniment at the congregational level of our Christian communities.

2) Ecumenism happens as we converse and share with “the other”.

Ecumenism happens in everyday conversation with the other when nobody imposes anything on anyone. Today the other is on our doorstep. Because of human mobility we do not have to travel to the South to know them. According to Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Observer for the Vatican before the United Nations, it is possible that there are around 200 million international emigrants in the world. Not only from South to North, but South to South (*Concilium*, 1008, 668). That is to say, globalization produces the fact that we all have different and foreign people close to us. This inevitable and visible multiculturalism dislocates thought and one language and reopens the concepts of identity, culture, and concepts such as ecumenism, evangelism and mission. Our time is characterized by the affirmation that there is not only one way to signify reality, “not only one language or languages in which the ‘truth’ can be affirmed with certainty” (Chambers (1995, 49). The Joint Working Group is right when it affirms that “doctrinal formulations of faith are culturally and historically conditioned. The same faith can be expressed in different languages in different moments, demonstrating it to be a liberating experience in dialogues, and it has helped create possibilities for the development of new understandings and relationships. The process of discerning a consensus in the faith should take

into consideration the distinct foci, emphases and languages and respect the diversity and the limits of diversity in and between the interlocutors” (JWG, 2005).

That is why coming together and dialogue with the other in the daily life is vital for understanding the world, understanding ourselves and the other. It is fundamental that the dialogue be recognized as mutual. The Spanish theologian Juan José Tamayo speaks of cultural polycentrism as the major fact of our time. He sees it as a paradigm shift in theological thinking. He affirms, “The new theological paradigm cannot sustain itself in the domination of one culture over another, that must submit or integrate with it...This clashes with the major fact of our time, that has an increasingly strong accusing conscience: *cultural polycentrism*, that must be reflected in Christian theology” (2003, 31).

Only a short time ago ethnocentrism dominated in our Western thought. If we accept reality as being polycentric, and we give to the other the space that we have, without hiding the unequal economic injustice, I believe that there could be a mutuality that is spoken of in the WCC Central Committee report when describing community in terms of mutuality: “mutual vision, mutual respect, mutual love, mutual understanding, mutual correction, mutual challenge and mutual transparency”. Sobrino, speaking of the importance of solidarity in an unjust world, also speaks of mutuality, but grounds it so it does not stay in the air: he speaks of the need to “mutually carry the victims of inequality (*op. cit.*, 54).

3) To Search for visible unity in the option for those excluded by the globalized society

Sobrino states that in today’s world there is “a deficit in ‘the will for truth’, a lack of integrity with the real” (2003, 69). It is not that it is unknown, in the news the reality of poverty appears and at the same time all the excesses, the emergence of illnesses that had been eliminated, the high costs dedicated to war and government corruption (*Ibid*, 71), or the fact that every year 50 million die of hunger (*Ibid*, 63). There is “a deficit in the will for truth” (*Ibid*, 44) because it is concealed, twisted and lives “effectively in the lie (*Ibid*, 73). This theater world is the central news along with horrifying news on the war in Iraq or the Middle East; there are no priorities or balances in the globalized society.

For Sobrino, the Christian faith must oppose the masking of reality with honesty with the real. This means “to listen to the word of reality and give voice to the reality” (*Ibid*, 88). This means a conversion of what is human to be moved to solidarity and an ecumenical opening to what we have just been speaking about. The opening to the other through honesty with the real, because in the first place, the other is “the impoverished and excluded other”. Change can occur if we “let ourselves be affected” by the unjust reality (*Ibid*, 36). Sobrino implores us to pick up and carry reality, as the impoverished people must carry it. If we will not take on this reality of injustice, that 80% of the world’s population shares only 20% of the world’s resources, we are not being honest with the real. A true ecumenism begins with this context and stands faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ: it is called to live united around the “crucified people”. This term “crucified people”, Sobrino takes from the Jesuit martyr Ignacio Ellacuria: “It is not only the existence of a great part of literal and historical humanity crucified by natural oppressions, but above all, by historic and personal oppressions”. (*Ibid*, 98)

I know that some people do not like to speak of “crucified people” because they say that now we are in post-modern times where we should speak more of cosmic truth that “we are all in all”. This seems to me beautiful, but I see it as a prayer to God, something we try to construct along the way when we live ecumenism as an opening to the other that is an I as I am. I believe as Paul Knitter, that “the cosmic truth can be and needs to be grounded and inspired by a shared preferential option for the suffering and the victims of this world”. This includes inter-religious dialogue, from which Knitter writes, “through such an option, religious persons will better say to themselves and to their dialogue partners...’I know in whom /what I have trusted’, 2 Tim 1:12”. (1996, 191).

There is no other starting point that experiences the resurrection now, that is not that of reality itself, exposed today through the global financial crisis and the wars waged with impunity. This is why Sobrino insists in seeing the sin of reality and also grace: the solidarity of many, the goodness of those who have bet on the overabundance of grace in confronting the abundance of sin.

I do not believe that we will have visible unity in the Eucharist, if first we cannot share bread, affection and care on the journey with the other. The story of the travelers on their way to

Emmaus is inspiring: on the road they share the marvels with the other, finally recognizing him as Lord when they share the bread.⁵ To realize that in the “other” there is divinity, as a creature made in the image of God, helps to avoid violence, to look with tenderness, to live ecumenically.

4) To be guided by the principles that oriented the way of Jesus

Now that we have presented the two analyses about the crisis of the globalized society and the future of Christianity, which forecast wars, our way to ecumenism should be guided by certain counter cultural principles that help to create a nonviolent mentality and do not allow society to invert them. The love for God and neighbor needs to be grounded so as not to fall into abstractions. I want to lift up three principles of Jesus, written in the Gospel of Mark in light of the Roman war against Palestine. They are instructions that Jesus gave to his disciples when they were going to Jerusalem and he announced his coming death three times. He inserts these instructions between the announcements of his passion.

a. Those who win, lose

When Jesus says that those who want to save their life will lose it, this means that it is impossible to win by killing. Persons demean themselves and lose their quality of being human, because to kill the other, one kills oneself. A war or an armed conflict is collective suicide. (Hinkelammert, 2003) In dehumanizing wars, all lose life by wanting to save it. Jesus shows another way: humanizing humanity by healing physical and social wounds and exorcizing the demons of militarism.

b. The last will be first

In the society of the First Century and in today’s society, those who are first are the most important. Those who have power, prestige, nobility and in military conditions, more and better arms are the ones who occupy the first places. The disciples or Christian communities are not an exception in thinking in this way. Indeed, two times the disciples discussed amongst themselves wanting power and wanting to be important (Mk. 9:34; 10:35-37) even within the Reign of God.

⁵ The Joint Working Group says “Dialogue represents the conversation of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, telling of the miracles done by the Lord, during a journey that culminates in the recognition of the Lord when they break bread at a common table” P.80

This also happens many times in ecumenical dialogues. Church leaders ask themselves who is the most important. Jesus teaches another way to think and to act opposite to that of the establishment: “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all”. (9:35; 10:44-45).

c. Those who rule are those who serve

In the third announcement Jesus explains how the Son of the Human Being will be turned over to the local authorities and the occupation forces and how he will be tortured, but will be resurrected on the third day. The request of the two disciples very close to Jesus did not make a connection with the announcement of suffering. To the contrary, they place themselves on the opposite side: the struggle for power (10:35-37). Again in this third announcement, the Gospel gives a guideline on how the Christian community should behave. James and John want to have honor and power at the side of Jesus in his glory. Instead, Jesus turns them again to the painful way of the cross. He teaches them another way to understand power. The search for power and glory traditionally understood as privilege and domination unleashes jealousy and struggles for power (10:41).

The power of governments and “the great” are described by Jesus as tyrants and despots (10:42). The two Greek words (*katakurieousin* and *kateksousiatsousin*) point to this excessive domination. What kind of power do we have in our churches? Many churches speak in one way but act in another; they speak of democracy but in practice there is evident authoritarianism and patriarchalism. Jesus repudiates this form of government⁶ because it negates the form of leadership in the Reign of God. “But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant (10:43). This is the way the new humanity inaugurated by the Son of the Human Being is manifested. His example was to serve even to give his life; he did not come to be served, but to pay with his life for the freedom of all.

I want to finish with a prayer to God that I prepared during a course on the Letter to the Ephesians. It is the foundation of the promises that we read in this letter. The first part of the

⁶ When the text refers to this type of leader it uses the participle *oi dokountes* “those who seem to govern”, that is to say, those who believe they are leaders. Therefore this is a total rejection of the traditional concept, which does not correspond to the way the Reign of God is governed.

letter is a poem, where the ultimate desire is that all creation be a hymn of praise to God. I will refer only to this part of the letter.

Prayer from the Letter to the Ephesians

The letter to the Ephesians suggests that all the cosmos is God's dwelling place, as a holy temple, as a well made construction, with room for the diversity of spiritualities. In this community all live "in Christ", a profound and constant image in Ephesians. It expresses that all inhale God and can smell God because we live bound to this divine atmosphere. For Christians, Jesus Christ is "God with us", the "the human face of transcendence". According to Ephesians 2:20 the human face of God is the cornerstone of God's dwelling place. This corner stone in the construction of the cosmic community always remembers that God is peace. Jesus Christ makes peace and announces it as good news (2:14, 15, 17). He has authority to do so. He knows in his own flesh violence, torture, and betrayal because he died crucified by the Pax Romana. This kind of military peace believes that by killing the enemy they will achieve peace. Military peace is peace without justice or embraces. "God with us" that incarnates peace, gives the scent of peace without deaths, nor rapes, nor domination, nor exclusions. It is a peace that builds, not pulling down people who climb walls, but pulling down the walls of enmity. It is not a peace that builds walls to protect themselves against migrants or for repelling wars. Walls lead to hate, exclusion, fear, assassinations and greed.

Ephesians 2:20 also says that the ancestors of this cosmic community, apostles and prophets, also form part of the foundation of this universal community. These pioneers of the community remind us of the vocation for which we have been created: to live simply as humans, interrelating as sisters and brothers, as God's family, including sister moon and brother sun. The footprints of the ancestors, the forgers of the community light our path.

Imagine peace lived in a cosmic community where there is room for everyone, from children with dirty faces and runny noses to the elderly who use diapers. And everyone is respected because God is in all.

In this cosmic community, holy temple, God's dwelling place, there are no arms, not even as toys; the nightmares of war and crime are left behind, buried in the rubble of walls that separate.

There is no violence because true peace brings food and work and dignity. There is no discrimination because “those who were once far off have been brought near” (2:13). There are no chosen nor left behind. All peoples dwell in the lap of God whose heart beats peace and reconciliation. Those who were far away were not assimilated by those who were close and those who were close did not maintain their privileges over the others because all became a new cosmic community, blessed by the diversity of tongues, cultures and ways of glorifying God the creator.

This is why I imagine peace without assimilation or exclusions, without dominion of some over others, because God’s dwelling in the other breaks the impulses of subjugation and violence. In this new human community diversity is lived in peace, and left behind are the desires to accumulate money at the cost of the poor and the preference for the color white and blond to brown and black. Oh! And it would never occur to anyone to feed machines with grains instead of living beings, because this new multicultural community is sensible, it lives the wisdom of God.

This is the ecumenism that I imagine and see in the Letter to the Ephesians as a promise which I want to believe is possible. It gives me strength to not fear the dark forces of the powers and authorities (6:12), forces that we do not see but feel their blows. It is this invisible hand that makes the monies of countries to rise and fall or petroleum to rise without falling and causes that suddenly basic foods become unattainable. Because God, the Epistle says, gathered all things in God, things in heaven and things on earth so that they would come together in the crucified divinity (1:10) and resurrected for the love of humanity. I am moved by the hope that as the crucified was resurrected and taken to a position beyond the dark powers, we have been resurrected and placed in this same position (2:10). This is why I believe that all of us are in some way “God with us” because God is in all parts, is all in all, and all give off the scent of God.

Now of course, when I open my eyes and see the world around us, I think that what I have said is no more than a prayer for a living ecumenism, a cry to God from the Spirit of God, the same as that from the earth that groans as a woman in labor pains (Rom 8:22)

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