

Rising You Restored Our Life: Restorative Justice as a Resource During COVID Times Holy Week 2021

Sr. Grace Walle, FMI



I write this annual Holy Week letter for *Justice Jottings* on behalf of the Anti-Death Penalty/Restorative Justice issue team. My reflections are inspired by our Acclamation of Faith at Mass with special focus on ‘rising you restored our life.’

What does restoring our/my life mean at this time in history and in light of the work of our issue team? “Restorative Justice” is a practice primarily used in criminology that emphasizes a cooperative process between both victim and perpetrator to repair harm done. The concept of restorative justice also comes from a Biblical notion that focuses on wrongdoing, repentance, material restitution, and reconciliation rather than retributive or punitive justice ([Numbers 5:6-7](#), [Leviticus 6:1-7](#), [Ezekiel 33:11](#), [Isaiah 53:5](#), [Micah 7:18](#), [Matthew 5:23-24](#), [Luke 19:8, 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, 10-11](#), [Galatians 6:1](#)).

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These biblical principles of restorative justice culminate on the cross, where the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ made the restoration of our broken relationship with God possible. We became right with God due to God’s grace, mercy, and forgiveness. This mystery of faith and power of the cross can become our model and framework to view, comprehend, and do justice in all sectors of our lives.

As we journey into Holy Week, I am in need of this faith message of restoration. The impact of COVID and the chaotic snowstorm in Texas more than upended my life. I felt anxiety for my health and wellbeing as well for our Marianist religious and lay members. I mourn, as do many others, the death of friends, relatives and Marianist religious whose deaths were hastened by the pandemic.

In the midst of these health crises, racial divisions became magnified. The protests after the death of George Floyd reminded us that throughout history, we humans have taken advantage of vulnerable people or remained apathetic or oblivious to the injustice around us. We viewed intense divisions and chaos in the United States. “Civic engagement” became “civic enagement.”

As in previous times of crises, the best of humanity was also revealed: hot meals being delivered, music playing on balconies, cheering in the streets for health care workers and first responders. These gestures conveyed messages of comfort, belonging, and social connections. On New Year’s Eve 2020, I experienced the hope of restoration, as I received the message of vaccine approval and a registration opportunity. Returning to the news, I was also reminded that there is much need for restoration in our country and world.

As the COVID crisis led to lock downs, we were “launched” into the world of ZOOM meetings. Fortunately, for our team it became an opportunity to reach across our Marianist world to provide opportunities to share the work of the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative. Our Anti-Death Penalty/Restorative Justice Issue Team recently hosted a panel for our Lenten Reflection entitled, “*Forgive Us Our Trespasses as We Forgive Those Who Trespass against Us.*” Our speakers included

- **Sister Donna Liette, CPPS** who ministers with mothers who have lost children to violence or incarceration and is a part of the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation team in Chicago.
- **Leonard Rubio** is Executive Director of Insight Prison Project. While incarcerated, he created an interfaith roundtable to promote restorative justice between prisoners and volunteers with different faith backgrounds.
- **Bill Fischer** who is Vice President for Student Development at the University of Dayton and focuses on student conduct, and conflict resolution system.

Each panelist relayed their personal experiences of people they encountered in the Circle Process. Leonard Rubio quoted a phrase that stayed with our issue team, “Hurt people hurt people.” The restorative justice process has been proven to break the cycle of hurt and to prevent and repair harms. The panelists’ compassionate sharing about this impactful process challenged us to discuss opportunities to apply circle practices in our family and community life.

Here are [2 outlines](#) of a Circle Process used for community-building. You may also find this [video of a webinar](#) helpful. It explores how restorative practices can offer ways of coping with life amidst the global pandemic. The discussion features insights from Sheryl Wilson, a restorative justice practitioner and national leader in restorative justice.

Our issue team views our mission not only advocating for an end to the death penalty but also promoting restorative justice that can be used in our religious and civic communities, schools, workplaces, and families. Some of our team members are becoming facilitators of the Circle Process and we hope to offer activities and outreach opportunities. Contact Mary Beaudoin (m.beaudoin3@verizon.net) for more information.

“Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life.” How do you need to reflect on this acclamation of faith during Lent, Holy Week, and Easter this year? Psalm 71:20-21 declares, “Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again.” May we draw spiritual strength from our Marianist community for the work ahead.