

**Catholic Peacebuilding Network Conference**  
**Bujumbura, Burundi**  
**July 26, 2006**

**OPENING REMARKS**

**Scott APPLEBY**

I bring greetings and best wishes from Father John Jenkins of the Congregation of Holy Cross, who is the president of the University of Notre Dame in the United States of America, and from Father Theodore Hesburgh, CSC, former president of the University and founder and living patron saint of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University.

I am here today in my role as a member of the steering committee of The Catholic Peacebuilding Network, and serving in the place of my colleague at the Kroc Institute, Mr. Gerard Powers, chair of the CPN steering committee, who coordinated the team that organized this conference.

The Catholic Peacebuilding Network is a voluntary network of practitioners, academics, clergy and laity that seeks to enhance the study and practice of peacebuilding, especially at the local and regional level. The network was established in 2004 by the Kroc Institute at Notre Dame and by Catholic Relief Services, with the active involvement of the Office of International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Maryknoll, the Center for International Social Development at the Catholic University of America, the Sant'Egidio Community in the United States and Pax Christi International. The steering committee, many of whom are in attendance today, includes scholars and practitioners from North America, the Philippines, South Africa, Europe and elsewhere.

It is said that there is nothing new under the sun. But there are new ways of thinking about and responding to old problems. The world's need to lay down its arms, purge jealousy and hatred from the human heart, and focus its resources and energies on the

suffering of the poor and dispossessed is no less urgent today than it was at the time of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Still today, as we heard in the liturgy we celebrated together on Monday, we are called to do justice, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God. And certainly it is not new for the Catholic Church to be engaged in the work of peace and justice. But today we enjoy and are simultaneously threatened by a new set of circumstances, in an era of expanded global communications and trade, accompanied by the intensified sharing across borders and cultures of both ideas and skills for the common good, and, lamentably, of weapons and ideologies of greed and destruction.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Church's faithful response to this new situation is a renewed and updated commitment to the building and nurturing of sustainable human relationships across every kind of barrier and border—ethnic, religious, economic, cultural—relationships dedicated to advancing the common good and the human dignity of all, to developing nonviolent solutions to seemingly intractable problems, and indeed, through the agency of the Spirit, to transforming human hearts. This building of economic, religious and social friendships we name as “peace-building.” The new name for justice in this interdependent world is PEACE. The new name for development is an old name renewed, PEACE. Both justice and development depend upon and assume the existence of the kind of constructive, loving, enabling relationships that stand at the heart of peacebuilding.

Indeed all of us are called, we believe, to refashion our ministries, our apostolic commitments, around this imperative of our Lord: Peace be with you! Bishops no less than laity are called to rethink their service to the Church and to the world, indeed their very vocation, around this mission of building peace. Thus we at CPN are heartened to observe the dawning and spread of this vocation. For many years now, following upon the Second Vatican Council's renewal of the Church's preferential option for the poor and its mandate that we proclaim the gospel in and through the local cultures, we have seen Catholic social teaching take on new life and express itself in new forms of solidarity. We come to Burundi in this spirit of solidarity with the people of this region,

and we come in the hope of deepening that solidarity through collaborative partnership and action on behalf of the poor and the victims of violence.

The CPN's mission, then is threefold: first, to listen and to learn from your experience and wisdom; second, to celebrate and lift up to others around the world all that the local and regional churches are doing to build peace and do justice; and third, to share ideas, resources and best practices through the network and far beyond it. Accordingly the CPN holds annual conferences for the purpose of listening and learning and then disseminating the best ideas and practices. Thus we are grateful for all who have traveled here, from Myanmar to the DRC to Colombia, from the Philippines and South Africa to South Bend, Indiana. We are grateful as well for theologians who have attended who will be participating in the construction of a Theology of Just Peace.