

***November 2013 - Message from Pastor Brian Rude -***

600 days--almost 20 months--of an astonishing level of peace, harmony and respect in Salvadoran prisons, in spite of their ongoing hellish conditions, is remarkable, nothing short of a miracle. It is especially a miracle considering the less-than-enthusiastic responses with which the subsequent evolving peace process have been met.

Officially and publicly, the success or failure of the truce / peace process is measured especially by the homicide rate, daily and monthly. The daily rate, which dropped from 14 to 5-6 in March, 2012, seems to have crept up to about 7-8 in recent months. On this basis, the truce has been declared dead by numerous observers on numerous occasions. To a lesser extent, extortion is used to measure the success and sustainability of the truce. This seems to have dropped marginally over these 600 days, though is certainly an ongoing threat. Some worry that the truce has enabled the gangs to gain more of a foothold, in terms of territory, credibility, influence and even criminal activity. Though not all gang members and factions are fully committed to this truce and peace process, officially, the gangs claim to be consistently and solidly behind it.

This peace process, which has accomplished an already remarkable transformation, especially in these Salvadoran prisons, but also, officially, in 11 municipalities, and in society generally, could still, in my humble estimation, benefit from better communication (less talking, more listening), broader consultation (non-leaders, especially inmates, being "taken into account", inmates expressing their views, rather than being taken for granted), more transparency, better communication, less *machismo*, more humility, less cigarette smoke, better communication, more promotion of family re-integration / overcoming of family disintegration, less neo-colonialism, more respect, better communication. Oh, and did I mention--better communication? No process is perfect, even if it is a peace process.

On this Reformation Day, I ponder the historic processes which took place in Central, then Northern Europe, almost five centuries ago. I would have to acknowledge that not every peasant was consulted before his or her prince chose to follow Luther, as to whether or not he should join up, taking the "gang" along with him. One envisions a democratic process, but recognizes that the ideal may be an illusion. I suppose we can't all always feel "taken into account".

Thanks to all who continue to be in solidarity with people of peace in El Salvador . . . and globally. May our God of peace continue to inspire and guide us all.

Committed to peace in El Salvador,  
Brian  
Rev. Brian Rude, DD,  
Synod of Alberta and the Territories' "In Mission with El Salvador / *En Misión con El Salvador*"

*P.S. You are invited to support this ministry by sending your gift to the "Alberta Synod" clearly marked "In Mission with El Salvador".*