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-- Back in 1995, when South Africa established a unity government it also created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The chair of this group was Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

-- The purpose of the commission was to investigate crimes committed by the previous white government and by the Black nationalist groups that fought against it.

-- Like the Nuremburg court after WWII, it had a trial-like atmosphere, but with a crucial difference: persons could apply for amnesty if they made full disclosure of their crimes and if those crimes were politically-motivated.

-- Not everyone who applied for amnesty got it, and the process wasn't perfect. But most people believe it made going to a Black-majority government easier and that it helped the country in the process of reconciliation of black and white people there.

-- Today the country of Sri Lanka is considering a similar process to deal with political crimes during their recent civil wars.

-- When the Law of Moses established the "eye for an eye..." principle, it was actually meant to limit vengeance: e.g., someone could not kill a whole family for the crimes of one member.

-- Or, to translate to modern terms, you could not shoot a person because he was playing music too loud in his car and refused to turn it down (recent Florida case).

-- But Jesus realized that even this principle could lead to a cycle of violence. As Gandhi said some 75 years ago, an eye for an eye will eventually leave us all blind. He lived that out in India.

-- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was one attempt to interrupt this cycle of violence on a national scale. But most of us are faced with personal challenges in this regard.

-- As one spiritual writer put it, we can't simply be electrical cords which simply pass on the energy—especially the energy of anger

and bitterness—that flow through them. We should be more like water purifiers, which remove those poisons.

-- That's not an easy task. Ask anyone involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960's. Ask someone who was involved in the solidarity movement in Poland before the fall of Communism.

-- It can be a dangerous task, and it is always difficult. For our first impulse is to strike back against anyone who is hurting us or people we love.

-- But remember whom we follow. We follow Jesus Christ. He did not strike back against his enemies. At the same time, he was not a doormat for them. His strength was in his powerful words and, more importantly, his powerful character.

-- Others have followed in his footsteps. In the lifetimes of those my age we have seen people like MLK, Nelson Mandela, Lech Walesa witness to the power of non-violent resistance.

-- We may not be called to such public witnesses. But we can all be peacemakers. We can refuse to get caught in bitter family disputes. We can talk to people with whom we have differences. We can offer to mediate between friends who've hurt each other.

-- For, as MLK once said, *Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that.*

-- Love does not mean liking someone. It does not mean approval of bad behavior. It is the desire to seek the good for someone, even (and especially) if we don't happen to like that person.

--That is the love we are called to show. That is the love Jesus showed for us.