

Rethinking peace in Burundi through the two standards meditation and the institution of bashingantahe

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**RETHINKING PEACE IN BURUNDI
THROUGH THE TWO STANDARDS MEDITATION AND
THE INSTITUTION OF BASHINGANTAHE**

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the S.T.L. Degree
from Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

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Abbreviations

D. R. Congo: Democratic Republic of Congo

SpEx: Spiritual Exercises

TRC: Truth Reconciliation Committee

Abstract

1. Description of the problematic: Lack of a lasting peace in Burundi.

Burundi has been the home of a cycle of violence for many years. Since the time of its independence, Burundians have lived in a period of turmoil, which merits special attention. The question becomes: “What can Burundians do in order to have a lasting peace?” “What are the Burundians’ resources that can help the country to overcome the actual situation of war?”

In traditional Burundi, we recognize an institution called *bashingantahe* (mushingantahe in singular) constituted of men of integrity. They always helped the country to stay at peace by their example and their sense of justice in rendering a just verdict while settling conflicts. When the colonizers arrived, the role of *bashingantahe* was weakened in some places and their role was no longer recognized. The country fell into war because, as the Burundian saying states, “there is no peace without *bashingantahe*.”

2. Solution: Standing for Christ as a way to a lasting peace in Burundi

The solution to our problem lies in standing for Christ (understood in the Burundian culture as being *umushingantahe*). Being *umushingantahe* implies living out a virtuous life. The first chapter of this thesis explains what being *umushingantahe* means and the role played by *abashingantahe* in traditional Burundi. Being *umushingantahe* is nothing else than being a witness of truth, a peacemaker, and an ambassador of justice. In each case, they are standing for and with Jesus who is calling us to stand with him in the Two Standards meditation.

The second chapter introduces the Two Standards meditation from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius understood in theory and practiced by way of living out a virtuous life. The Two Standards make an appeal to stand either with Satan or Christ. This thesis stresses particularly the importance of standing for and with Christ. Burundi will have peace if people rise up and stand for Christ (in becoming *bashingantahe*).

The third and final chapter opens up a way for *bashingantahe* to work for a lasting peace by helping people to pursue forgiveness and reconciliation. A peaceful state supposes respect, compassion and understanding each other. Those virtues are fruits of real forgiveness and reconciliation.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Since the time of its independence Burundi has experienced cycles of violence because of the tensions between the major ethnic¹ groups, Hutu and Tutsi. More than 300,000 people were killed between 1972 and 1993. According to the report by the International Commission of Inquiry for Burundi presented to the UN Security Council in 2002, this period witnessed the genocide of Hutu and Tutsi respectively.²

In April 2015, the president Pierre Nkurunziza, after two consecutive terms as president, decided to run for a contested and unconstitutional third term. From that moment on, protests began and security deteriorated, with more than 400 people killed and 200,000 refugees in Rwanda, Tanzania, and D.R. Congo.³ To this day, the police continue to arrest people, especially youth, who, they presume, oppose the president's third term. They jail, torture and even kill them. Human dignity and the value of human life seem to have disappeared in Burundi.

As a consequence of war and continual violence, Burundians experienced and still are experiencing extreme poverty, violation of laws, abuses of human rights and a lack of stability and peace. An oppressive system that violates freedom and human dignity makes those who suffer vulnerable.

Violence encompasses every aspect of life. Hate-filled and divisive government speeches on national television and radios spread fear and insecurity. Those who incite

¹ It is a common practice to refer to Hutu and Tutsi as “ethnic” groups in Burundi. However, these two groups experience the same culture, live together and have everything in common such as school, market place, place of worship, and language. A more general term such as “social group” may be more appropriate.

² United Nations Security Council, S/1996/682, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/commissions/Burundi-Report.pdf>. Accessed online May 4, 2016.

³ Ibid.

violence along with criminals are often portrayed as heroes. Values are disregarded during this time of crisis. Those holding considerable wealth, a small group of the population, tend to get richer during the time of war and instability. Often, they use the government to protect their riches and resort to violence against innocent citizens. The rest of the population feels abandoned and helpless in the face of such violence. Burundians are accustomed to violence that gives rise to a growing culture of indifference in such a way that some Burundians are convinced that there is no way to stop it. This conviction causes Burundians to fight violence with violence—and the cycle of violence continues.

The generative questions of my thesis are: “How can Burundians come to a lasting peace?” “Are there cultural and spiritual resources that can help them in their struggle for full humanization?” It is important to know that violence must be faced and opposed, if violent people are left to determine Burundi’s fate. The evils of war must be continually confronted and eradicated. Peace must be sought and preserved if it is to prevail. One must seek and live in truth in order to live well. Truth is the essential component of peace. Where there is no truth, there is no peace. Without truth, there is corruption, lies, dishonesty, mistrust, war, and death. In his work *For the Pacifists* (1949), Mohandas Gandhi illustrates it well when he says:

The way of peace is the way of truth. Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness. Indeed, lying is the mother of violence. A truthful person cannot long remain violent. He will perceive in the course of his research that he has no need to be violent, and he will further discover that so long as there is the slightest trace of violence in him, he will fail to find the truth he is searching for.⁴

⁴ Mohandas Gandhi quoted in John Dear, *Toward a Vow of Nonviolence. Disarming the Heart* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), v.

As Gandhi states, truth is very important for peace. Without truth, one lives a lie. The truth sets things right and makes people free and trustworthy. With truth, corruption is eradicated and trust and love emerge in one's community. Standing for truth is encouraged in order to be truly human. Truthfulness is one of the characteristics of human integrity.

In his book *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, Matthew Kelly highlights: "truth leads to fullness of life, and deceit seeks to rob us of that fullness of life in a thousand different ways. But we do not simply stumble into truth. Truth must be sought with humility and perseverance."⁵ Truth shapes our freedom, enlightens our intelligence and allows us to live well. St. Augustine explains what living well means:

To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's efforts; from this it comes about that love is kept whole and uncorrupted (through temperance). No misfortune can disturb it (and this is fortitude). It obeys only [God] (and this is justice), and is careful in discerning things, so as not to be surprised by deceit or trickery (and this is prudence).⁶

As noted, living well is living virtuously. Human virtues are acquired through education, experience and a constant perseverance in an effort of purifying oneself in order to arrive at practicing the good. Experience shows that it is not easy for sinful human beings to preserve moral stability. But all "human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).⁷

⁵ Matthew Kelly, *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic* (Hebron, KY: Dynamic Catholic Institute, 2012), 86.

⁶ St. Augustine, *De moribus eccl.* 1,25,46: PL 32,1330-1333 quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), no. 1809.

⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1812.

Many books and articles have been written on reconciliation and justice in order to promote peace and harmony in Burundi. This thesis goes a step further. It reflects upon the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, especially the “Two Standards meditation,” and the concept of Burundian *Bashingantahe*.⁸ Just as St. Ignatius stressed the meditation of the Two Standards in order to help the retreatant make a good and sound election,⁹ in the same way, Burundi needs *abashingantahe* for peace and harmony. In this thesis, it is important to understand the term *bashingantahe* as a practical way to stand for Christ because *umushingantahe* always stands for the truth.

In the past, different leaders of Burundi have victimized *abashingantahe*. They rejected the truth by rejecting *abashingantahe*. This thesis is a cry of one of Burundi’s children for truth in order to see peace reigns again. My deepest desire is to see the institution of *bashingantahe* restored so that every family understands that it is their responsibility to help their children to become *bashingantahe*.

My first inquiry investigated how the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius could help bring peace to Burundi. As I was reflecting on the Exercises and peace in Burundi, I was inspired to consider that the institution of *bashingantahe* could be seen through Jesus’ call in the Two Standards meditation. In stressing the Two Standards meditation and the concept of *bashingantahe* of Burundi, I could see how peace is related to them.

⁸ The *bashingantahe* institution in Burundi is made up by elders with irreproachable morality. Among other qualities, *umushingantahe* (singular of *bashingantahe*) should be mature, having an experience and wisdom. *Umushingantahe* must demonstrate a high sense of justice, equity, and a concern for the common good. He must be characterized by a sense of responsibility, a sense of moderation and balance in his words and actions. A *mushingantahe* must be a defender of the truth and capable of discretion. *Umushingantahe* must have a sense of dignity, honor and courage.

⁹ Election is an Ignatian term, which means a deliberate decision without any influence from inordinate affections and in the light of a deep relationship with the Creator and other creatures. The decision should lead to a choice of one’s state of life, a confirmation or an amendment of the state one is already in.

As Thomas Merton wrote in *The Catholic Worker*, “the duty of the Christian in our day and age is to work for the total abolition of war.”¹⁰

The thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter explains the concept of *bashingantahe* of Burundi. When one says the word *umushingantahe*, what is understood immediately by a Burundian hearer is the witness of truth. Burundian *bashingantahe* are very important because there cannot be a peaceful country without them. They are called the keepers of peace and the guardians of the tradition. This section highlights also the role played by women in the *bashingantahe* council.

Though *bashingantahe* are viewed as men of integrity and virtues, they are limited and need salvation, just as any other human being. This chapter introduces Jesus Christ as the true *mushingantahe* because by his deeds and teachings, he is a model of being human and human living. He calls every person to stand for and with him in order to be fully human.

The second chapter introduces the Two Standards meditation as a meditation which fits the Burundi’s context. In that meditation, St. Ignatius of Loyola compares Lucifer with the *love of the world*. So to stand with Lucifer means also to be a lover of worldly things. Lucifer tells us to desire worldly possessions, honor and pride. In contrast, Jesus invites us to poverty and humility, which lead to freedom. The question becomes: where do I stand? Where is my place in this struggle between good and evil?

Burundi is experiencing a period of turmoil where the opposing forces are evident. Some Burundians are tempted by riches. They fight for honor and esteem of this world. They forget who they are: God’s children, who are killing their brothers and sisters because pride has taken hold of their hearts.

¹⁰ Thomas Merton quoted in John Dear, *Toward a Vow of Nonviolence*, 123.

Other Burundians adopt Jesus' example in helping others to stand for the truth and the values of the Gospel: compassion, cooperation, justice, solidarity with the poor etc. In Burundi language, they are called *bashingantahe* because they promote life and harmony in the community. They are men for others. In order for Burundi to come to a lasting peace, Burundians must strive to embrace Jesus' call in responding to his call by means of living a life of virtue like *bashingantahe*.

The last and third chapter demonstrates that in order for Burundi to recover peace, the *bashingantahe* must engage in the service of forgiveness and reconciliation. As *gacaca*¹¹ settled new life in Rwanda after the genocide, the *bashingantahe* of Burundi must help Burundians to come together again and drink from the same pot.

¹¹ The *Gacaca* court (*Kinyarwanda*: [gatʃatʃa]) is a system of community justice inspired by Rwandan tradition where *gacaca* can be loosely translated to "justice amongst the grass."

CHAPTER 1

***Bashingantahe*: People of Integrity – Choosing to Live a Life of Truth and Virtue in the Context of Burundi**

This chapter examines the institution of *bashingantahe* of Burundi. It contains three essential points: The first point presents Burundi and its geographical, historical, and political context. It also presents the current situation of turmoil, which is causing violence and despair in Burundi since April 2015.

The second point defines the *bashingantahe* in the Burundi's context and describes their accomplishment throughout Burundi's history. The last and third point in this chapter introduces Jesus Christ as the true *mushingantahe*. In fact, *ubushingantahe* is a process, which cannot be completely achieved. Jesus is the only true *mushingantahe* who satisfies all human virtues and on whom everybody can rely.

1. 1. Burundi and its geographical, historical, social, and political context

Burundi is a small landlocked country in East Africa. Its area is 27,834 square kilometers. It is surrounded by D.R. Congo, Tanzania and Rwanda. Burundi is formed mainly of hills and plateaus. The capital, Bujumbura, lies along Lake Tanganyika. There is only one national language: Kirundi. The second language is French. Kirundi is the language that everybody speaks; French is used only in schools and in business. Christianity is the most widely practiced religion. Roman Catholics predominate, alongside Protestants and Muslims. Indigenous beliefs no longer exist. Burundi comprises two main ethnic groups: Hutu and Tutsi.¹

¹ Hutu and Tutsi are the two major tribes in Burundi. The Hutu constitute 84% of the population and the Tutsi 14%. There is another tribe: Twa which constitutes only 1%.

Traditional Burundians highly respect women for their role in society. We call a woman “*kirumara mu muryango*” which can be translated as “the one who is very important in the family,” and “*yinarugo*,” which means “mother of the entire family.” Consequently, the education of girls is directed toward being the mother of the entire family. At an early age, a girl is taught to take care of the house and to be open to welcome children whenever she chooses to marry. The respect of life and the promotion of peace within her household is stressed in the education of girl. Women who are educated in Burundian lifestyle are not familiar with terms like divorce and conflicts in their families.

In traditional Burundi, marriages were arranged. Two families met without the knowledge of their children and agreed on a possible marriage. When the groom’s house was ready to welcome the bride, she was brought during the night to her future husband and the marriage was consummated. The two learned to live together, and slowly, their love would grow and reach maturity. They bore children, educated them in Burundian culture, with an emphasis on respecting elders and keeping the tradition. When conflicts occurred, the two families could meet again to discuss the root cause of the problem and a solution was found. It is important to note that traditional Burundi was peaceful and proud of its sons and daughters.

The crisis in contemporary marriages is widespread in Africa and other continents. Shaped by technology and an easy life, patience is no longer on our side. Love is often fleeting and rarely do we find lifelong commitments—though these should be our goal. When two people decide to marry, their commitment should be for life, with divorce not even an alternative.

In her work, *Historical Dictionary of Burundi*, Ellen K. Eggers asserts that the history of Burundi began between 800-1000 CE, when the first migrants arrived in what would become Burundi.² David Ress suggests a much earlier period. He holds that “the first large movement of modern man into the Burundian hills probably came sometime between 700 and 300 BCE.”³ Ress goes on to indicate that “sometime towards the end of the 1600s or the start of the 1700s, Ntare (the first King of Burundi) created a kingdom which covered most of what is now the Republic of Burundi.”⁴

Four kings ruled over Burundi in a cyclical basis⁵: Ntare, Mwezi, Mutaga, and Mwambutsa. Some historians agree that there was a certain contract, since “the legitimacy of the kingship was never seriously questioned.”⁶ The last king to rule over Burundi was Ntare V (Charles Ndizeye) exiled in 1966 by a military coup and assassinated during the 1972 massacres.

Two countries colonized Burundi in different periods: Germany (1890-1916) and Belgium (1916-1962). Independence took place on July 1st, 1962. Since the time of independence, Burundi has been characterized by many periods of turmoil, which need to be discussed in order to understand the current social and political situation of Burundi. In fact, those former times of unrest still influence Burundi’s political and social stability.

After only some years of independence, the two major ethnic groups namely Hutu and Tutsi started to fight about leadership. The conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi are a result of decades of colonial and post-colonial leadership that entrenched division, hate,

² Ellen K. Eggers, *Historical Dictionary of Burundi* (Lanham, Md & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1997), xxxi.

³ David Ress, *The Burundi Ethnic Massacres 1988* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991), 28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵ For example, Ntare II would reign after Mwambutsa I, and Ntare III after Mwambutsa II, etc.

⁶ Rene Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnocide as Discourse and Practice* (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-2.

and discrimination. Those quarrels ended up in a terrible war in 1972, which killed many people and sent many others into exile. Since the 1972 war, the Hutu-Tutsi split started to be radicalized by both parties and it would be only in 1993, when the first democratic election took place, that the country hoped to regain its stability. The hope turned into a nightmare when the elected president, Melchior Ndadaye, was killed by a group of extremist Tutsi soldiers. The period of hostility lasted for ten full years of civil war. The damages were immense both socially and humanly.

Since 2003 and until 2015, there was a kind of peace. In fact, there was no open war or violence but there was a lot of corruption due to bad governance. The atmosphere in the country was not generally good since the first term of the current president Pierre Nkurunziza in 2005, which culminated in his taking by force a third term, which caused another civil war starting in April 2015.

Today's turmoils are the fruit of many frustrations and unresolved problems. The question which guides our research is: "what can be done to resolve the conflict in Burundi and with which resources?" The following section presents the role of men in traditional Burundi who are called to become *bashingantahe*, people who are known as models in virtues and other moral qualities. They embody the virtues of justice, righteousness, moderation, and love of truth.

1. 2. The role of men in traditional Burundi: becoming *bashingantahe*

In traditional Burundi, a man was considered to be the protector, the provider and the leader of his entire family. A man was called upon to care for a woman. While the woman is the symbol of life, the man is there to protect and to promote this life. He is the

keeper of tradition and a symbol of peace.

Burundian culture contains the concept of “*mushingantahe*”⁷ which is an institution of those men who help the country to avoid or to overcome its problems. In *The Role of Informal Justice Systems in Fostering the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict Situations: The Case of Burundi*, Tracy Dexter and Philippe Ntahombaye give an ample definition of the *abashingantahe*:

Bashingantahe is the plural of the word *mushingantahe* that is derived from the words *gushinga* (‘to plant or fix’) and *intahe* (‘ficus stick’) and means ‘the one who plants the stick into the ground’. It is so named because of the court stick, *intahe*, that the *bashingantahe* strike rhythmically and in turn on the ground to insist on the importance of the words they are using and the decisions they render while arbitrating conflicts; it has been transmitted from generation to generation. In a metonymical and symbolic sense, *intahe* means justice and equity. The word *ubushingantahe* means, on the other hand, the set of values underlying the *bashingantahe* institution.⁸

The *bashingantahe* are known in Burundian culture as men of integrity who stood for truth and tried to keep the serenity of the country by exercising and inspiring others to virtues and good manners. If the country is experiencing war and the vices that follow, it is because our leaders have pushed away *ubushingantahe*. According to a Burundian saying: “There is no peaceful country without *abashingantahe*.” The *bashingantahe* are known as keepers of peace and tradition.

As one can see, the *bashingantahe* are men of integrity and Burundian society considers them as men of wisdom. I grew up in a culture where the *bashingantahe* were

⁷ Assumpta Naniwe-Kaburahe, “The institution of *bashingantahe* in Burundi” in *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experience*, Luc Huyse, Mark Salter, eds. (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2008), 149-179.

⁸ Tracy Dexter and Philippe Ntahombaye, “The Role of Informal Justice Systems in Fostering the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict Situations: The Case of Burundi,” July 2005 Report, Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva, 2005, 10.

respected and loved. They were exercising a positive influence in our society. *Bashingantahe* were symbols of unity and harmony. They embodied peace, virtues and always inspired trust and justice.

The main requirement in order to become a *mushingantahe* member is to be “*invugakuri*,” which means “a person who did not fear to say the truth whatever the cost.”⁹ Because of the truth, which characterizes every *mushingantahe*, one of the duties assigned to *bashingantahe* was to settle disputes between neighbors.¹⁰ Ntahombaye and his colleagues assert that “by settling disputes in a judicious manner, a *mushingantahe* proved to everyone that he was a man of peace and unity.”¹¹ In general, *umushingantahe* must be characterized by a virtuous life every day.

Kelly underscores the importance of a virtuous life: “We need to focus first and foremost on becoming men and women of virtue and character, and leading others to do the same. Every good thing we hope for the world will flow from the reemergence of character and virtue in our lives and in society.”¹²

As Kelly states, virtues are very important for every human being in order to become more human and for finding one’s main mission of self-realization and come to a meaningful life. Without a virtuous life, human beings destroy what our forefathers built and they destroy each other, making life meaningless. St. Gregory of Nyssa gives us a

⁹ Philippe Ntahombaye et al., *The Bashingantahe Institution in Burundi. A Pluridisciplinary Study* (Bujumbura: Life & Peace Institute, 1999), 26.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Matthew Kelly, *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic* (Hebron, KY: Dynamic Catholic Institute 2012), 149.

good summary on the importance of virtues when he says: “The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.”¹³

Emphasizing the importance of virtues, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* highlights: “A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but also to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.”¹⁴

As symbols of virtues, *bashingantahe* are good examples for all Burundians. Describing a *mushingantahe*, Philippe Ntahombaye says: “He was a man who enjoyed some life experience and who was well balanced as a person. He had to be a dignified person who could contain his emotions and passions, like fear and anger. Physical maturity had to be matched by psychological maturity. The *umushingantahe* was a discrete, little-spoken man.”¹⁵ In their report of 2005, Tracy Dexter and Philippe Ntahombaye underscore:

Traditionally, a *umushingantahe* should possess the following qualities: maturity, experience and wisdom, a heightened sense of justice and equity, concern for the common good, a sense of responsibility (individual, family and social), a sense of moderation and balance (in his words and acts), dedication and the love of work. To these essential qualities are added the moral and intellectual qualities of truthfulness, discretion, and intelligence, a sense of dignity and honor, and courage. He should also be materially self-sufficient.¹⁶

¹³ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, 1: PG 44, 1200D, quoted in *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, part III, Article 7.

¹⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part III, Article 7, no. 1803.

¹⁵ Philippe Ntahombaye et al., *The Bashingantahe Institution in Burundi*, 25.

¹⁶ Dexter and Ntahombaye, “The Role of Informal Justice Systems in Fostering the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict Situations: The Case of Burundi,” 11.

To give an exact definition of the concept of a *mushingantahe* seems to be impossible. How can we find a definition, which embodies all the values and virtues? In dealing with this question, Ntahombaye conducted interviews in 1999 with different people and saw the way the *bashingantahe* were perceived by other Burundians. The question was: *Umushingantahe ni ukuvuga iki ku bwawe?* According to you, what is the meaning of the word *umushingantahe*?¹⁷ The following table constitutes answers from different people.

Answers	Number	%
<i>Umuntu yatiwe</i> : an invested man	44	15.4
<i>Umuntu avuga ukuri</i> : a man who tells the truth	110	38.5
<i>Umuntu ahanura</i> : a man who gives advice	36	12.5
<i>Umuntu agwanira ubutungane, amahoro</i> : a man who strives for justice and peace	28	9.8
<i>Umuntu abanguranya</i> : a man who mediates between people in conflict	40	14
<i>Umuntu aca imanza</i> : a man who renders justice	27	9.4
Total	285	100

The table concludes that out of 285 answers, 110 indicate that “the fundamental quality of a true *mushingantahe* is to tell the truth and only the truth.”¹⁸ This has characterized the *bashingantahe* of Burundi for centuries. Telling the truth gives credibility to *bashingantahe* and people can always rely on them because they trust them in every regard.

In traditional Burundi society, women were excluded from being part of *bashingantahe* council. Joseph Gahama asserts that women were initially not chosen to be part of *bashingantahe*, because on many occasions, “they had proved incapable of

¹⁷ Philippe Ntahombaye et al., *The Bashingantahe Institution in Burundi*, 75.

¹⁸ Ibid., 75.

keeping secrets in the accomplishment of their duties.”¹⁹ This assertion that women are unable of keeping secrets creates stereotypes that exclude them from office and gradually distance them from power. Agnes Nindorera argues that the incapacity to keep a secret is not reserved to women only.²⁰

In 2002, an extraordinary congress of *bashingantahe* gathering five elected representatives from every province took place. Different organs and powers of the institution of *bashingantahe* were formally established. During that congress, the institution included 33% of women in its management committees.²¹ Naniwe-Kaburahe says that “the presence of women at management levels constituted a definite asset which helped to trigger positive reflection on the conditions for investiture of women in their own right—something which up until then Burundian tradition had not permitted.”²²

The role of women is very important in traditional Burundi. Mothers play a major role in the education of their children. Nindorera points out that women of Burundi are in charge of teaching their children the very virtues that are looked for in *umushingantahe*.²³ She concluded that “this reality contradicts the idea that a woman could not possess the same qualities of *ubushingantahe*.”²⁴

To sum up, the idea of the non-inclusion of women in total participation in the institution of *bashingantahe* needs to be reviewed. In fact, as Nindorera asserts: “*ubushingantahe* is a philosophy of life, a way of self-being, and a life style within a

¹⁹ Ibid., 23.

²⁰ Agnes Nindorera, “Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation in Burundi,” Working Paper no. 102, Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights, Boston, 2003.
http://genderandsecurity.org/sites/default/files/ubushingantahe_as_a_base_for_political_transformation_in_burundi_2.pdf. Accessed online May 10, 2016.

²¹ Naniwe-Kaburahe, *The Institution of Bashingantahe*, 149.

²² Ibid., 162.

²³ Nindorera, “Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation in Burundi.”

²⁴ Ibid.

community. It implies a set of virtues, qualities that are acquired through education, life experience within a community, obedience to the values, customs and rules of the community, and a personal commitment to serve others and the public interest.”²⁵ With this definition, one could notice that male as female can partake to the *bashingantahe* institution.

1. 2. 1. The origin of *bashingantahe* and investiture

On the origin of the *bashingantahe*, Joseph Gahama points out that “The *bashingantahe* institution is as old as the Burundian monarchy. It dates back to the reign of Ntare Rushatsi, the founder king of Burundi by the end of the 17th century.”²⁶

According to Gahama, in implanting the *bashingantahe* institution, the king wanted to highlight two major things: “the importance of witnesses to ascertain evidence,” and “the crucial role played by the elders vis-à-vis the younger generation.”²⁷

The college of the *bashingantahe* participated in royal authority and worked as judges who gave just verdicts regardless of a person’s nobility. They were men on the side of the weak, the unfortunate, the orphaned, and the underprivileged. In short, they stood for truth, harmony, justice, and virtue. The college of the *bashingantahe* incarnated wisdom.²⁸ The *bashingantahe* gave justice to the oppressed and consoled the sufferers and orphans.

Before conferring this power of *umushingantahe* on somebody, the community must recognize from his lifestyle the value of his being. To be chosen, the future

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Philippe Ntahombaye et al., *The Bashingantahe Institution in Burundi*, 23.

²⁷ Ibid., 24

²⁸ Ibid., 149.

mushingantahe must demonstrate certain fundamental virtues, such as goodness, a great heart, knowledge, patience, a sense of responsibility and justice, love, and be a lover of truth and wisdom. Other ethical and intellectual talents are also required, such as discretion, a sharpened discernment, self-esteem and esteem for others, a spirit of moderation, commitment to bravery, trustworthiness, and a sense of honor and dignity.²⁹

A candidate for *ubushingantahe* is called *umuganantahe*. Philippe Ntahombaye explains that “the term applies to any man who is not yet invested; here people want to stress that his behavior reflects the ideal of the *bashingantahe*.”³⁰ The word *umuganantahe* is made up by two words: *umugana* and *intahe*. *Umugana* is derived from *kugana* which means *going to* or *toward* and *intahe* means a *staff of justice*. Then *umuganantahe* would mean literally “the one who is going toward helping bring justice.” It is a last stage before the rite of investiture that confers on the candidate the right of *umushingantahe*.³¹

Prior to investiture, the future *mushingantahe* (*umuganantahe*) must undergo an initiation with the help of his mentor (*igicocoro*: an elder *mushingantahe*), a well-established and strongly respected notable. The future *mushingantahe* is trained to exercise humility, patience, and tolerance and above all to love. It is important to explore each virtue in turn.

For *umushingantahe*, *humility* is important in order to accomplish his mission. He is a man for others and a keeper of tradition. Humility helps him always to be open to advice and to the knowledge that he needs others. Humility helps him to know that he is not sufficient on his own but that it is always necessary to work with his peers.

²⁹ Ibid., 26.

³⁰ Ibid., 67.

³¹ Ibid.

Umushingantahe knows that he is a limited person, and that will help him to be open and learn from others. *Umushingantahe* should be vested with humility in order to serve better his own people. An arrogant *mushingantahe*—though it would not be appropriate to bear that name any more—would oppress his subjects instead of liberating them.

Umushingantahe needs to be *patient* all the time. He is invited to serve various people with different needs. Patience helps to see goodness in others and hope for a better future. Patience believes in growth and the capacity to change because it always empowers others by encouraging them.

Tolerance is another important virtue for *bashingantahe*. Tolerance comprises both humility and patience. *Umushingantahe* serves people who have their own stories and experiences. He is different from them as they are different from him. He learns how to discern the good in each and everyone and helps each person to grow in maturity and move always forward. *Umushingantahe* has his own background, with which he struggles and trying to overcome bad habits and tending always to perfection.

Love is the final and most important virtue for *bashingantahe*. Love makes a *mushingantahe* a judge without partiality and a good leader. Love, which is not mere feelings but respect oriented toward truthfulness and a sense of justice.³² *Bashingantahe* are always characterized by a high sense of justice, which is linked with the idea of righteousness. After the time of probation, the candidate is invested with official authority and given the staff (*intahe*) as symbol of his authority.

During the ceremonies of investiture, the master of ceremonies asks the candidate: “Do you accept to abide by the laws of this country, to be a merciful person ready to assist the needy? Do you accept to be the light of the country, to render justice in an

³² Ibid., 26.

equitable manner and to avoid corruption in the course of trials?”³³ This question invites the candidate to express his oath, which consecrates him as a *mushingantahe*: “I accept and pledge before the King and the *bashingantahe* to serve always the cause of truth in the conflicts that I shall have to settle.”³⁴

Adrien Ntabona explains the time following the investiture: “From the moment of investiture, the notable is considered as a mature man, a man of confidence, capable of being responsible in his environment.”³⁵ From that moment on, the new *mushingantahe* is known as a responsible man, with strong character, serenity, trustworthiness and peacemaker.

1. 2. 2. The role of *Bashingantahe* in Burundian history

On the institution of *bashingantahe* and their role in Burundian history, Assumpta Naniwe-Kaburahe declares: “The ancient institution of *bashingantahe* in Burundi is made up of elders, people of irreproachable morality. It presided over the juridical organization of the country at all levels and played the role of check and balance on power, ensuring that arbitrary judgment and lack of justice were curbed.”³⁶

Burundian history reveals that the *Bashingantahe* played an important role at critical moments that Burundi experienced throughout the twentieth century. During the time of conflicts for instance, the *bashingantahe* tried to reconcile the two parties and bring them together. They helped especially in restoring justice on matters related to lands and domestic violence. They always favored peace and harmony among citizens.

³³ Ibid., 29.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 51.

³⁶ Naniwe-Kaburahe, *The Institution of Bashingantahe*, 155.

In 1993 a civil war between Hutu and Tutsi began killing many people and leaving many others in poverty, despair, and misery.³⁷ The youth became especially marginalized because of the lack of role models. They witnessed violence, injustice, and corruption from those whom they long held as examples. For them, there was often nothing to hope for because the future was uncertain. Some left school because they did not see any value in it. The killers had been to school, and the initiators often had university degrees. What is the importance then of going to school if it cannot make us good people? During the 1993 war between Hutu and Tutsi, the intervention of *bashingantahe* was magnificent. Naniwe-Kaburahe asserts:

In the 1993 crisis many traditionally invested *bashingantahe* tried to protect persecuted individuals, save victims from the criminals and organize themselves to arrest killers and looters. Many are considered heroes in their local communities. Following the return of calm, in several areas these men started to organize themselves to engage in a process of reuniting and reconciling communities.³⁸

The war between Hutu and Tutsi which started in 1993, handicapped the development of people of Burundi. It made some people wonder where the *bashingantahe* went, if there are no people of good character, advisor, or if there are only monsters! Some concluded that “there are no more *bashingantahe*, because had there been some, the disaster (which by the way is still going on), would not have happened. Others said that there are still *bashingantahe* because, according to them, if there were

³⁷ In October 1993, the first president elected democratically, Melchior Ndadaye, was murdered by a group of Tutsi soldiers. Since the time of independence in 1962, only Tutsi held power. Ndadaye was the first Hutu president. The Hutu concluded that the Tutsi did not want them to rule the country. They started to kill their Tutsi neighbors. That is why the war bore the connotation of “ethnic.”

³⁸ Naniwe-Kaburahe, *The Institution of Bashingantahe*, 160.

none, the situation would have become worse.”³⁹ Naniwe-Kaburahe shares the view of this testimony when she states that “in places where *bashingantahe* were present, many lives were spared and the *bahutu* and *batutsi* stayed united, thanks to these elders.”⁴⁰

After ten years of civil war and many attempts at dialogue between the government and the rebels, there was a signing of the Pretoria Agreement between the two parties in November 2003. Since then, the security situation improved until 2015,⁴¹ the end of the second term of our current president Pierre Nkurunziza. Since he announced his candidacy for a third term in April 2015, the country fell again into a serious crisis. Its end is difficult to predict. In 2005, when the now ruling government won the elections, they rushed to suppress the institution of *bashingantahe*. They were afraid of being judged for their wrong deeds during the 1993-2003 crisis.

Without *bashingantahe*, the country falls into war, so goes the Burundian saying. The country needs people who can sacrifice themselves for the sake of others, a healthy leadership. Georges S. Counts confirms this when he writes:

Any individual or group that would aspire to lead society must be ready to pay the costs of leadership: to accept responsibility, to suffer calumny, to surrender security, to risk both reputation and fortune. If this price, or some important part of it, is not being paid, then the chances are that the claim to leadership is fraudulent. Society is never redeemed without effort, struggle, and sacrifice. Authentic leaders are never found breathing that rarefied atmosphere lying above the dust and smoke of battle.⁴²

Leadership is an art. It requires training and a good education. In traditional Burundi, kings and princes were trained and educated for that particular mission. A

³⁹ Philippe Ntahombaye and Liboire Kagabo, *Traditional Institutions of Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts. Testimonies of bashingantahe during the 1993 Crisis in Burundi* (Bujumbura: Université du Burundi: Life & Peace Institute, 2003), 1.

⁴⁰ Naniwe-Kaburahe, *The Institution of Bashingantahe*, 149.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁴² George S. Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (New York: The John Day Company, 1978), 2.

leader should be vested with virtues that help him or her to exercise his or her mission with loyalty and magnificence.

Given the structure and function of the *bashingantahe*, one should know that the *bashingantahe* work with other leaders in the country and always consult others before making any decision. In that regard, Philippe Ntahombaye and Zenon Manirakiza assert:

The *bashingantahe* adhere to the principles of faithfulness to commitments (a reference to the oath), dialogue and consultation, consensus and collegiality in decision-making, the requirement for truth and the sense of responsibility, discretion and impartiality. The procedures for judging cases are accusatory, contradictory, oral and public. In principle, his services are to be provided without a fee.⁴³

Before rendering a decision, the *bashingantahe* attempt reconciliation. They provide counsels (*impanuro*) that respect the individual. Because many are poorly educated, the *bashingantahe* use common sense and the wisdom they got from their sponsors. Knowing right and wrong within a particular context does not require a degree. Though wisdom is God's gift, it also flows from one's openness to life and the way one decides to embrace that life. The *bashingantahe* choose to serve others by humbling themselves and becoming men and women for others.

As noted, the candidate for *ubushingantahe* vows many good things: to abide by the laws; to be a merciful person; to assist the needy; to be the light of the country; to render justice in an equitable manner; and to avoid corruption in the course of trials.⁴⁴ But, *umushingantahe* is still a human being who can fail to fulfill his promises. *Ubushingantahe* is an ideal which cannot be perfectly fulfilled. Jesus alone is the true *mushingantahe*.

⁴³Dexter and Ntahombaye, "The Role of Informal Justice Systems in Fostering the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict Situations: The Case of Burundi," 12.

⁴⁴ Ntahombaye and Kagabo, *Traditional Institutions of Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts*. 29.

1. 3. Jesus as the true *mushingantahe*

The previous section summarized what constitutes a Burundian *mushingantahe*. As noted, the *umushingantahe* is considered a wise, accountable man upon whom other people should rely. A *mushingantahe* is a reconciler and a lover of justice because he is himself a righteous person. Although the *mushingantahe* might be a virtuous man, he is a limited person who can err and make mistakes. That is why *ubushingantahe* should be characterized as an ideal, a vocation, which involves an ongoing process of growth and learning. Nobody has arrived at the point when one is able to say: “now I am a true *mushingantahe*.”

The *bashingantahe* of Burundi are known by their deeds and their words. As presented in the last sections, *bashingantahe* are recognized to be people of virtues, and whose morality is unquestionable. Burundians are urged to take them as examples in their own life. As noted earlier on, the *bashingantahe* inspire peace, joy, and harmony. They are called upon to reconcile people, to advise rulers and to help the country keep its traditions. The *bashingantahe* have done that in the past, and as noted, where *bashingantahe* were present during times of war, those areas were saved. By their deeds, *bashingantahe* showed their courage and the spirit of sacrifice.

The *bashingantahe* are limited, finite human beings like everyone else. But they decide to participate in the full realization of their people. They open up to life and bring it to others. They choose to work for peace, harmony and for a future full of happiness. The *bashingantahe* choose to work for and with Christ. They respond to Jesus’ call of spreading the Good News of peace, reconciliation, and harmony. They are limited but they have chosen to follow the one who is not limited: Jesus.

The aim of this section is to introduce Jesus Christ as the true *mushingantahe* by his exemplary life. Jesus' life, words and deeds, show us the essence of the institution of *bashingantahe*. Thus, Jesus should stand as a model, even the perfect model of what it means to be *umushingantahe*. The Scriptures proclaim that he is sinless. John the Evangelist presents Jesus looking people in their eyes and telling them: "Which one of you can prove that I am guilty of sin?" (John 8:46). This conviction of his sinless condition makes Jesus a unique person who fulfills the human condition, because according to Brian Pierce, sin makes human less human.⁴⁵

This section comprehends three points: The first point presents Jesus as a true *mushingantahe* by his deeds. Throughout the four Gospels, Jesus is presented as a man of good reputation, who healed the sick and restored broken hearts. Jesus provided comfort to the sufferers and even gave hope to the hopeless.

The second point presents Jesus as a true *mushingantahe* by his words. By his teachings, Jesus testified to the truth and that it is only by the way of truth that a human being finds his or her liberation and fullness of life.

Taking the Sermon on the Mount as an example, the third point presents Jesus as the righteous one, in virtue of his being the one designated by God as his true covenant partner. The third point investigates how Jesus could be a model of *bashingantahe's* righteousness.

1. 3. 1. Jesus as true *mushingantahe* by his deeds

To the question: "who is Jesus for you?" there are many answers. Some answers

⁴⁵ Brian J. Pierce, *Jesus and the Prodigal Son: the God of Radical Mercy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 60.

are: Jesus is the Son of God; he is my savior; he is my friend; he is a miracle worker; etc. The description of Jesus depends on what kind of relationship one has with him. But the best way to describe him is to read what St. Peter says: “He went about doing good works and healing all those oppressed by the devil...” (Acts 10:38b). Here, one notes that Peter was amazed at Jesus’ generosity, compassion, and mercy. Jesus, a wandering prophet who has “no place to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20), but whose food is to obey the will of the one who sent him and finish the work he sent him to do (John 4:34). And that work is to bring God’s kingdom to full realization in the midst of the world, a kingdom characterized by peace and justice. In his book *Believing in Jesus*, Leonard Foley makes comments on the person of Jesus as seen by Mark, the Evangelist. He underscores:

The picture of Jesus in Mark’s Gospel is that of a man totally available, totally generous, almost always in the middle of a pressing crowd. Almost the first thing told of him is that he went out into the street to help people in need. Mark spends little space on what Jesus said. He is concerned to show Jesus immediately curing a man possessed, healing Peter’s mother-in-law and welcoming ‘...all who were ill or possessed by demons.’⁴⁶

Foley presents Mark’s Jesus as one who is in a hurry, as one who does not have time to waste. He moves very quickly, cleansing lepers, restoring paralyzed persons and releasing a wild man from the devil’s power (Mark 5:1-20). It is surprising to see that he does not even observe the Sabbath when it is about doing good deeds! “A good deed does not violate the Sabbath.”⁴⁷ It is important to note that in daring to challenge the current rule about the Sabbath, Jesus exposed himself to the criticisms of the Pharisees and their suspicions of blasphemy. But as a true *mushingantahe*, he does not count the cost when it is about restoring human dignity and welfare.

⁴⁶ Leonard Foley, *Believing in Jesus: A Popular Overview of the Catholic Faith* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009), 39.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

In his book, *The Priority of Christ, Toward a Post Liberal Catholicism*, Robert Barron underscores Jesus' deeds and attitudes towards the lowly, the sick and to the Pharisees, his hypocritical opponents. He says: "Jesus' table fellowship with the poor and destitute, his embrace of the sick and the sinful, his critiques of the Pharisees and temple authorities were all challenges to the religious and cultural *status quo*, which stands opposed to God's order."⁴⁸ Here, Barron presents Jesus as a good man who is concerned with the poor, the underprivileged. He takes care of the sick and does not reject sinners. He represents justice and criticizes those who are not righteous. To his disciples, Jesus says: "I have come in order that you might have life—life in its fullness" (John 10:10). Jesus' deeds characterize him as a true *mushingantahe*.

Commenting on the parable of the prodigal son, and starting with the words of the father in the parable: "For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive" (Luke 15:24), Pierce sees the prodigal son as Jesus who was sent into the midst of suffering, injustice, corruption to bring the Good News of God's radical mercy.⁴⁹ At the end of his mission, which costs him a shameful death on the cross, he was raised from the dead and returned home to the Father.⁵⁰

In the Letter to the Hebrews, the author testifies: "we have a great high priest who has gone—Jesus, the Son of God. Our high priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy for our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a high priest who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin" (Hebrews 4:15). This passage shows Jesus able to have feelings. He can feel pity for our weaknesses. Also, Jesus knows about temptations

⁴⁸ Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Toward a Post Liberal Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2007), 38.

⁴⁹ Pierce, *Jesus and the Prodigal Son*, 49.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

because he was tempted but did not allow sin to corrupt his humanity. We can then count on him in everything because he knows what human suffering means as a human being, but he is also able of saving us because he is the God-Man. In thinking of Jesus as divine and human, Christians have in mind Jesus as the perfect person, sinless and all-powerful. As such, he can be called the genuine *mushingantahe*.

1. 3. 2. Jesus as the true *mushingantahe* by his words

As noted earlier, the word *mushingantahe* carries in itself the word “truth.” In the past, every *mushingantahe* was seen as the bearer of the truth. But today, the word *mushingantahe* has faded and has lost its former value. Adrien Ntabona, a Burundian diocesan priest and the author of many books and articles on the institution of *bashingantahe*, states that the word *bashingantahe* is now similar to a title given to every Burundian male without reservations. He says: “*aujourd’hui, on entend même appeler mushingantahe tout être masculin sans plus.*”⁵¹

Sometimes testifying to the truth is challenging. Many people do not want to hear the truth. It reveals their wickedness and disturbs their being. They prefer darkness to light. But Jesus reminds us in the Gospel that it is only by living out the truth that we will become free. He says: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32).

In his book *Let all God’s Glory Through*, Peter G. Van Breemen writes, “The link between faith and daily life consists mainly in transparency. The separation of the two troubles many Christians and impoverishes our world. It will be overcome in the measure

⁵¹ Adrien Ntabona, *Itinéraire de la Sagesse* (Bujumbura: Editions du CRID, 1999), 8.

that we let ‘all God’s glory through.’”⁵² In other words, Breemen is saying that “faith without action is dead” (James 2:14-26). Living out the faith is living in truth and that is God’s invitation to every human being.

Though the truth is often expressed differently, it is one. The truth has its source in God because God is the ultimate Truth.⁵³ If then, God is the Truth, his Son Jesus Christ is the full manifestation of that truth. To Pilate, he declares himself “for this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice” (John 18:37).

The main purpose for Jesus’ coming in the world as indicated in this passage is to testify to the truth and to bear witness to the truth. Coming to the truth and knowing the truth depends on how one opens up to the truth. Jesus gives promises to his disciples: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). As noted, freedom is acquired in truth. Truthfulness in our daily lives is required if we are to be faithful Christians. Kelly explains it clearly when he asserts: “Truth leads to fullness of life, and deceit seeks to rob us of that fullness of life in a thousand different ways. But we do not simply stumble into truth. Truth must be sought with humility and perseverance.”⁵⁴ For Christians, love and truth must nourish our way of thinking, speaking, and doing. As St. Paul tells us, by “speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

Truth is at the heart of Jesus because he calls himself: “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Jesus strongly criticizes the Pharisees because of their hypocrisy. The whole of Matthew 23 is dedicated to teaching against hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is an act of

⁵² Peter G. Van Breemen, *Let All God’s Glory Through* (Mumbai: St Pauls, 1995), 7.

⁵³ Leo Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1990), 246.

⁵⁴ Kelly, *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, 86.

pride and self-righteousness and acting practically in a different manner. The Pharisees were versed in the Scriptures and were men of the Law (Acts 26:5). But they did not act according to what they knew and taught others. Again, they displayed a lack of love, compassion, and concern toward their fellow men and women (Matthew 23:5-7). Jesus did not tolerate their behavior and invited them to “justice, mercy, and honesty” (23:23).

Applied to the self, “truthfulness becomes the particular virtue of integrity, marked by a capacity for self-criticism.”⁵⁵ Truth leads to self-realization, peace, and harmony. Jesus, being the truth itself and testifying to the truth and inviting all people of good will to come to the truth, shows himself to be the true *mushingantahe* in his words and actions.

1. 3. 3. Righteousness as Jesus’ way of life: a true model for *bashingantahe*

In his book, *Les Abashingantahe à l’heure de l’Interculturation*, Adrien Ntabona explains some of the responsibilities of the *bashingantahe* of Burundi: (1) to settle complaints through judicial means or through the reconciliation processes; (2) to counsel and balance political power at all levels; (3) to speak on behalf of the common good, of human rights and of socio-political responsibility whenever considered necessary; and (4) to validate, in the name of the population, the new king, the new chief, and the new sub-chief.⁵⁶ Most Burundians would perceive *bashingantahe* as “good” judges. In *Life After Violence: A People’s Story of Burundi*, Peter Uvin agrees with this when he says that the “*bashingantahe* – wise men, are appointed by local communities themselves, acting as

⁵⁵ Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 948.

⁵⁶ Adrien Ntabona, *Les Abashingantahe à l’heure de l’Interculturation* (Bujumbura: Editions CRID, 2010), 27.

local mediators and judges.”⁵⁷

As noted, the *bashingantahe* were extremely important in the community, especially before colonial times. They were consulted not only by the king, but also by the community, who considered them righteous and wise. Their goal was to help the community to maintain moral standards and to be peaceful and harmonious.

This section analyzes Jesus’ righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount in order to focus on Jesus as the true model of *bashingantahe*’s righteousness in proposing a new way of living. But what is “righteousness”? *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* defines righteousness this way:

The Hebrew word translated “righteousness” (*sadiq*) and its related nominal and verbal forms has the basic meaning of someone or something proven true, especially in a legal context. It therefore has the meaning “innocent” and is applied in the Bible especially to moral conduct and character. But the scope of righteousness is much wider than judicial procedures and embraces the whole covenanted life of the people under God.⁵⁸

As this definition points out, in essence, “righteousness” (translated in Greek language as *dikaïosunê*) is being in the right because one is living in accord with God’s covenantal love, now incarnated in Jesus as the new covenant and as one’s true righteousness.

The theme of righteousness is a salient feature in the evangelist Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount. It extends from Matthew 5:6, where Jesus blesses those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness,” up to Matthew 6:33, where Jesus calls his disciples to “strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Righteousness, therefore,

⁵⁷ Peter Uvin, *Life After Violence: A People’s Story of Burundi* (New York: Zed Books, 2009), 7.

⁵⁸ John Ziesler, “Righteousness,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, 655.

is necessary for salvation and becomes a new identity and a characteristic for Jesus' followers.⁵⁹

Jesus invites his disciples to a righteousness that “exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees” (Matt 5:20). He elucidates this life in inviting the disciples to move from words to the practice of righteousness: almsgiving, prayers, and fasting (Matthew 6:1-18). Matthew 25:31-46 speaks of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, attending to the sick, and visiting the imprisoned (Matt 25:31-46), which are the effects of true righteousness. Frank J. Matera summarizes the Sermon on the Mount this way:

By placing the sermon at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, shortly after his initial proclamation of the kingdom (4:17), Matthew shows that there is an intimate connection between the indicative of salvation (the gospel of the kingdom of heaven) and the moral imperative it requires (a righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees). The sermon begins with nine beatitudes and two metaphors (5:3-16) that serve as a preamble to what follows. Next, Jesus makes an important statement about the enduring validity of the law and the prophets and the need for disciples to practice as superior righteousness (5:17-20). He then gives an extended teaching on righteousness (5:21-7:11) that concludes with a summary of the law and the prophets (7:12). The sermon ends with a series of harsh warnings about the importance of putting this teaching into practice (7:13-27).⁶⁰

According to Matera, Matthew uses the term “righteousness” in an ethical sense to show the conduct required in order to inherit the kingdom.⁶¹ The Sermon on the Mount shapes and offers the community a new style of living. It contains a program for the

⁵⁹ Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Theology: Exploring Diversity and Unity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 30.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

world.⁶² In putting into action the Sermon on the Mount, the community takes account of its relationships with God and one another.

For many Christians, the Sermon on the Mount constitutes the core and the essence of Christian life. It sets a list of moral principles, which guide Christians toward moral integrity. Gerhard Lohfink writes:

Jesus also taught his disciples and had them practice and internalize the right way of life, and the Torah was by no means absent, as we can see from the Sermon on the Mount. There we find a collection of rules for interpretation, for a right understanding of Torah, and also any number of tangible examples of how Torah is to be grasped and lived now, at the time of its eschatological fulfillment.⁶³

As Lohfink states, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presents himself as a master of the right way of living. He gives a list of characteristics of a Christ-like life. These characteristics are followed by blessings for those who will live what Jesus is suggesting. Blessedness, for Jesus, is more than happiness because happiness is temporary, but blessedness is a lifelong condition based on God's promises. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows to his disciples, and to those who will follow him later, his concern for their and the entire community's genuine living. It highlights how he is the true model of righteousness, and thus, a true example of *abashingantahe*.

What follows is a summary of the beatitudes and the promises of the blessings that those who will follow his teachings will receive.

Characteristics	Blessings
<i>The poor in spirit</i> : being humble and	Kingdom of God

⁶² Raymond Thomas Gawronski, *A Personal Ignatian Retreat: A Closer Walk with Christ* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003), 137.

⁶³ Gerhard Lohfink, *What He Wanted, Who He Was*. Translated by Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011), 75.

recognizing that God is great.	
The mourners: who repent and regret their sins.	Those who mourn will be comforted.
<i>The meek:</i> Those who submit themselves to God. Gentle to everyone.	They will inherit the earth.
<i>Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.</i> A deep desire of God.	God will fill them with love, peace and joy.
The merciful. The merciful help those who are suffering.	The merciful will receive God's mercy.
<i>The pure in heart.</i> Those who seek only God with their deepest desire.	They will see God.
<i>The peacemakers.</i>	They are called God's children.
<i>Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.</i>	They rejoice because they are doing the right things. They will receive a reward in heaven.

This summary of the beatitudes found in the Sermon on the Mount shows that Jesus is setting a new way of living for the society in general and his disciples in particular. He is a teacher and a model of righteousness. He is a true model of *bashingantahe* to follow.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to present a rich tradition, which is found in Burundian culture: the institution of *bashingantahe*. As noted, the *bashingantahe* institution comes from a verb '*gushinga*,' which means to 'plan' or to 'fix,' and '*intahe*' which means the 'staff of justice.' Literally then, *umushingantahe* signifies a person who plants the stick of justice. Concretely, *umushingantahe* means a person who stands for justice.

The *bashingantahe* have helped Burundi thanks to their wisdom since the 17th century. The king of Burundi at that time, Ntare Rushatsi, wanted people of good reputation and virtues to help him in matters related to justice and resolving conflicts. He

implemented the institution of *bashingantahe* made by men of strong character, but at the same time selfless in their behavior. To be called *mushingantahe* before the 21st century was an honor. Now, the name is trivial just as the title: “gentlemen.”

As seen in this chapter, the *bashingantahe* were chosen among young men who impressed other people by their character and behavior, their sense of courage and the love of the country. Another criterion was intelligence, which was depicted during one’s speech. In Burundian culture, a well structured speech with many sayings that shows that the candidate knows his culture was one of the most serious criteria to become *umushingantahe*. But wisdom, integrity, tolerance, maturity, and other virtues were the basic norms for being chosen as *mushingantahe*.

The importance of *bashingantahe* was shown during Burundian conflicts, which plagued the country for many years. The *bashingantahe* were considered heroes in the place where they were, and many of them died because they did not only refuse to participate in the massacre, but they defended the persecuted. Some killers saw them as threats and others as outcasts. They were no longer thinking from a common ground.

Given their virtues and their importance in advising and resolving conflicts, the *bashingantahe* are to be admired and praised. They advocate for orphans and widows. They render justice to the poor and promote human dignity. The *bashingantahe* stand for the truth. They stand for Christ, because he says that he is the “way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

As noted, the *bashingantahe* are not perfect; they are still affected by this world where sin is present. They need redemption and mercy because they can err like anybody else. But their openness, simplicity, and humility show that they are drinking from the

one source of the truth even without noticing it. A virtuous man or woman, according to St. Gregory seeks to be configured to his or her Creator.

We noted that though *bashingantahe* are limited, Jesus is not limited. *Bashingantahe* are sinners; Jesus is the sinless one. *Bashingantahe* testify to the truth and Jesus is the Truth himself and he came to testify to the truth. And by his deeds and words, Jesus has shown that the purpose of his coming was to establish God's kingdom which is characterized by peace, justice, and harmony. He is the prince of peace. Jesus came especially to announce Good News to the powerless, the poor, and the underprivileged. He came for the sick and not the healthy.

This section treated also the theme of righteousness as presented in Matthew's discourse known as "the Sermon on the Mount." By his teaching, Jesus helps us to understand that loving and caring for each other, living in peace, and acting justly are accessible ideals. In insisting on being righteous, Jesus gives a recipe for restoration of relationships among human beings and with God. The Sermon on the Mount shows that the followers of Jesus should strive to live in an appropriate manner. They are called upon to live according to God's will.

In this, Jesus becomes an example and a good model to follow. By rendering justice to the poor, orphans, and widows, by his love and his concern for the underprivileged, by his virtues as a sinless person, Jesus deserves the title of the true *mushingantahe*.

As already noted, *umushingantahe* means "witness of truth." In fact, traditional Burundian males were invited to become *bashingantahe*, in order to stand for the truth. *Bashingantahe* were recognized to be men of good reputation in the community, and

those who never viewed the community in terms of ethnic or religious affiliation. *Bashingantahe* choose a life of virtues. Virtues are important for every human person because they lead to a life of integrity, which is characterized by a sense of equity and justice, a concern for truth, righteousness and self-esteem. As Jesus is the genuine model of *bashingantahe*, in turn, the *bashingantahe* must be models for Burundians, men and women alike. Rejecting to become *umushingantahe* is to choose to stand for falsehood, corruption and the like.

The following chapter discusses the Two Standards meditation. It portrays two subtle forces at work in the world: Lucifer and Christ. The Two Standards meditation invites us to choose between standing with Christ, or with Lucifer. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus clarifies it when he states that "he who is not with me is against me" (Luke 11:23). Each person has to choose where to stand—with Jesus or with the world. Those baptized and confirmed, we are already invited to stand under Jesus's flag.

"The meditation on the Two Standards asks whose side are you on?"⁶⁴ To be able to give a satisfactory answer requires a certain knowledge of, relationship with, and experience of Jesus Christ received in prayer and in daily living. The question that Jesus asks his disciples: "who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15) is asked of the retreatant who is invited to deepen his interior knowledge of Christ in order to be with him and serve him better.

The following chapter presents in details the Two Standards meditation in order to focus more on how Burundians as *bashingantahe* could stand for Christ who is the prince of peace. Peace will settle through the full awareness and knowledge of their

⁶⁴ Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 182.

dignity, and the dignity of every person as son and daughter of God, and that life is sacred and nobody is allowed to take it from another person.

CHAPTER 2

Two Standards: *Bashingantahe* as a response to Jesus' call

This chapter introduces the Two Standards meditation. It is part of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola which is a set of prayers, meditations, contemplations, and other methods of examining one's conscience. In proposing the Two Standards meditation, Ignatius believed that there are two forces, or spirits at work within each person, each recognizable by its effects. This meditation resonates well with Burundi's context as far as it suggests choosing Christ who is a life giver and a true model of *bashingantahe*.

This chapter consists of four points. The first point presents the overall dynamic structure of the Spiritual Exercises. The second point presents the place and the purpose of the Two Standards in the Spiritual Exercises. In this part, my aim is to highlight the importance of the Two Standards meditation in order to grow in intimacy with the Lord for the one making the retreat and come to decide which way to follow in serving Him more closely. The third and fourth points discuss the meaning of the meditation on the Two Standards respectively, the call to stand for and with Lucifer and the call to stand for and with Christ. The Two Standards meditation invites the retreatant to discern the spirits¹ (SpEx. 313-336) at work in this world. The purpose of the meditation is to understand both the tactics of Lucifer with humanity and those of Jesus Christ.

As a reflection based on the context of Burundi, one can know that war is one of the fruits of hatred, which is a response to Lucifer's appeal whereas peace is one of the

¹ St. Ignatius defines the "discernment of spirits" as "motions of the soul." It is a call to be sensitive to the interior movements such as thoughts, imaginations, desires, and feelings of attractions or repulsions. It is also a call to notice where these interior movements come from and where they lead us.

fruits of love, which is a response to Jesus' call. Burundians are urged to stand for truth as *bashingantahe*, in order to find a lasting peace.

2. 1. General Dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are “a process of prayer, reflection, and discernment that help bring a person to freedom in order to hear God’s call and to respond in faith.”² The Exercises are an experience and a way to encounter God. They constitute “a journey of transformation and conversion.”³

As physical exercises are important for one’s health sake, St. Ignatius (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus, saw also the need for spiritual exercises to prepare the soul to find God’s will (SpEx. 1). The story begins with a battle in Pamplona in 1521, during which he was wounded. During his recovery, Ignatius, a Spanish knight, read the *Life of Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony, the *Flos Sanctorum* stemming from Jacobus de Voragine, and the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis.⁴ When he reconsidered the worthless literature he had read previously and thought about what he was now reading, he noticed that the former left him high and dry but the spiritual reading consoled him. Ignatius kept a spiritual journal of his many spiritual experiences. Both from his own experience and that of others, he discovered how God works.

He learned how to discern between desires rooted in vanity and others grounded in holiness. He was discerning the effects, the results of daydreaming about certain thoughts. After reflecting on his own life and experiencing God’s forgiveness and pardon,

² Gerald M. Fagin, *Putting on the Heart of Christ: How the Spiritual Exercises invite us to a Virtuous Life* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010), xv.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴ Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits. Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice* (Chicago: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1964), 153.

he decided to leave everything in order to follow Jesus Christ more closely. At the end of his reflection and his decision of following Jesus Christ in all things, he thought that his experience of prayer and his experience with others could help other people as they helped him. In the same line, R. A. F. MacKenzie underscores:

In the mind of St. Ignatius, the Exercises to which suitable candidates were invited to devote a whole month, were intended to reproduce for them the Saint's own experience of his conversion to God. They propose in universalized form a sequence of acts similar to those through which God guided Ignatius himself, in the castle at Loyola, at Manresa [...] at the University of Paris. It is the Saint's purpose to make available to his neighbor [...] the opportunity at least of receiving the same great graces God had bestowed on him.⁵

The Exercises took root in Ignatius's own experience of prayer, penances and his inner struggles, which includes his study, readings, pilgrimages, pastoral experiences, and mystical graces. Ignatius also learned much from conversations with others. Over the course of two years 1522-1524, Ignatius composed a small book called the *Spiritual Exercises*.⁶ He gathered together meditations, contemplative practices, and prayers in a small book, which he called the *Spiritual Exercises*. The *Spiritual Exercises* are to be done under an experienced director who knows the exercises and understands what the retreatant is undergoing. The book of the *Spiritual Exercises* is for the director and not for the one making the retreat.

In his work: *Karl Rahner, Mystic of Everyday Life*, Harvey D. Egan asserts: "The *Spiritual Exercises* contain not only the fruits of Ignatius's personal mysticism and

⁵ R. A. F. MacKenzie, S.J., "Biblical Theology and the *Spiritual Exercises*," in *Contemporary Thought and the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1963), 68-69.

⁶ George A. Aschenbrenner suggests that Ignatius composed the Exercises during his stay at Manresa (Spain) in 1523. Cf. George A. Aschenbrenner, *Stretched for Greater Glory* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), 1.

spirituality, but also of his pastoral experience. They can be called the school of prayer created for and taught by the Society of Jesus.”⁷ William V. Bangert presents the aim of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in this way:

Called the *Spiritual Exercises*, this small volume is not a spiritual treatise such as the *Introduction to the Devout Life* of St. Francis de sales, but rather a series of practical instructions on methods of prayer and examination of conscience, on ways to arrive at an unbiased decision, on plans for a variety of meditations and contemplations, all aimed to help an exercitant discover God’s will for him and to carry it out with vigor.⁸

According to Karl Rahner, “the Spiritual Exercises are nothing but an election or choice: the choice of the means and the concrete way in which Christianity can become a living reality in us.”⁹ In making the Exercises, the exercitant is invited to become forgiving, compassionate, a loving person with a passion to carry out the Father’s will.¹⁰ The Spiritual Exercises have a certain plan to be followed and a genius goal, which should be attained at a certain point. This goal is an election or a choice of one’s state of life. In fact, Ignatius and those Jesuits he trusted to give the Exercises selected very carefully the candidates to make them. Most people were given only some Exercises to enable them to distinguish mortal sin from venial sin, go to confession, and receive Communion. Only select individuals were given the entire Exercises for thirty days Exercises.

To capture the purpose of the Exercises, one can assert that the Exercises help the exercitant to gain the ability to see and make decisions in the way Jesus sees and makes decisions. In his article, *When Are Spiritual Exercises Ignatian Spiritual Exercises?*,

⁷ Harvey D. Egan, *Karl Rahner, Mystic Of Everyday Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 29.

⁸ William V. Bangert, *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986 (2nd ed.)), 9.

⁹ Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, translated by Kenneth Baker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 11.

¹⁰ Fagin, *Putting on the Heart of Christ*, 11.

Mark Rotsaert also writes: “The Spiritual Exercises are composed in order to lead to a choice. There is no other spiritual book in the sixteenth century, no other prayer book that shows us a way to come to a good decision, to a good choice by contemplating the life of Christ.”¹¹ In his work, *Seek God Everywhere: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Anthony de Mello writes, “If you love truth, be a lover of silence. Silence like the sunlight will illuminate you in God and will deliver you from the phantoms of ignorance.”¹² The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius are the fruit of silence, prayer, and especially of a careful listening to God.

The content of the Exercises is organized into four “weeks.” This term does not necessarily designate seven chronological days, but it refers to “the grace sought and granted as a result of each week’s exercises.”¹³ Annotation no. 4 (SpEx. 4) explains that time should be set according to the subject matter.

After the annotations, one finds the Principle and Foundation. It sets the foundation of the Exercises as it lays down the relationship between God and human beings, between human beings and all created things. All other meditations and contemplations are supported by the way Ignatius insists upon the goal of life and the means to attain that goal in the Principle and Foundation.

Four Weeks follow the Principle and Foundation. The first week is designated as purgative way. In this week, the retreatant reflects on his past and present sins. A general confession is recommended. He or she also thinks of the sins present in the world and his

¹¹ Mark Rotsaert, “When Are Spiritual Exercises Ignatian Spiritual Exercises?” *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 32/3, no. 98 (2001): 31.

¹² Anthony De Mello, *Seek God Everywhere. Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (New York: Image/Doubleday, 2010), 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 28.

or her own participation in them.¹⁴ How can he or she participate in fighting against them and their consequences?

The second week corresponds to the illuminative way. The retreatant wants now to know the One he or she rejected during his or her past sins.¹⁵ In fact, sin cut us off from God's grace, but God's forgiveness is always bestowed upon the repentant. Therefore, it is time for the retreatant to build a new relationship with Jesus Christ. In the second week the retreatant reflects on the Call of the King and the Two Standards meditation. At the end of the second week, the retreatant makes his or her "election" or choice of state of life or what needs to be changed in one's current state. This is a central moment in the Spiritual Exercises: the discernment of God's invitation to follow him in one's life.

The third and fourth week correspond to the unitive way. During the third week exercises, the retreatant contemplates Christ's sufferings, passion and death.¹⁶ The retreatant suffers with Jesus who is suffering and dying on the cross for him or her. The tree of humiliation and suffering becomes a source of increasing love for the retreatant who ponders God's love for him or her in contemplating the crucifixion of the Lord.

The cross and the death of Jesus Christ have never been the last event. The resurrection, which followed, constitutes good news for every follower of Jesus Christ. The retreatant is invited to contemplate Jesus' resurrection in order to rejoice with the Lord and participate in his joy as he or she participated in his suffering. In experiencing the Risen Christ the retreatant is filled with consolation and rejoices with Christ who triumphed over death. Ignatius defines consolation as an increase of faith, love, and hope in the Lord (SpEx. 316).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

2. 2. The Place and Goal of the Two Standards meditation

The meditation of the Two Standards is found at the beginning of the second week of the Exercises. The Two standards meditation comes before the making of one's election (SpEx. 169-189), at the core of the central week of the Spiritual Exercises. The second week unfolds as follow:¹⁷

Days	Exercises	Comments /Repetition
	The Kingdom meditation	To be done twice in the day.
Day 1	Incarnation and nativity	Two repetitions and application of the senses.
Day 2	Presentation in the Temple. Flight into Egypt.	Two repetitions and application of the senses.
Day 3	Jesus obedient at Nazareth and the finding in the Temple.	Two repetitions and application of the senses.
Day 4	Two Standards	Four times: midnight, dawn, before Mass, Vespers.
	Three Classes.	At the time of the application of the senses.
Day 5	Our Lord's departure from Nazareth to the Jordan and his baptism.	Two repetitions and application of the senses.
Day 6	How Christ went from the Jordan into the desert. <i>The Biblical counterpart of the Two Standards.</i>	Day of Election.
Days 7-12	Mysteries of the life of Christ.	

St. Ignatius organizes the Two Standards meditation in two parts: the Standard of Lucifer (SpEx. 140-142) and the Standard of Christ (SpEx. 143-146). In his introduction to the Two Standards meditation, Ignatius distinguishes them in this way: "The one of

¹⁷ William Yeomans, "The Two Standards," *The Way*, Supplement 1 (1965): 16-17.

Christ, our supreme leader and Lord, the other of Lucifer, the deadly enemy of our human nature” (SpEx. 136). One Ignatian commentator writes of the Two Standards meditation:

The first [leader] is Satan, symbol of evil—that is, death to the spirit—who seeks his end by inviting one to riches and to honors and ultimately pride, seen as the ultimate rejection of the kingdom. The second, of course, is the person of Christ, who, standing for everything counter to death, advocates life to the fullest, first, through the embrace of spiritual poverty; secondly, by a willingness to risk rejection for not defining ourselves by worldly values; and thirdly by genuine humility.¹⁸

In the meditation on the Two Standards, Ignatius presents two images: Lucifer, “the enemy of human nature,” and Jesus, our supreme leader and Lord. Lucifer is seated on his throne amidst fire and smoke in a great plain of Babylon, surrounded by many demons, and instructs them to invade the whole universe to convert everyone to his cause. Lucifer offers his followers worldly wealth, honor and pride. Worldly riches lead to honor, and honor to pride (SpEx. 140-142). With pride, Lucifer convinces his followers that they are “independent” and need no help, especially from a remote and unseen God.

On the other hand, the exercitant is asked to ponder Jesus. Beautiful and attractive (SpEx. 143), he stands in a lowly place on a great plain around the region of Jerusalem. What does Jesus do? He asks his disciples, apostles, and all people of good will to go to the entire world and spread his Gospel. He invites them to abide in him, to live in poverty and humility (SpEx. 143-146). Jesus’ disciples should seek wealth, security and honor in him and not in worldly riches. Ignatius does not reject riches at all cost, but they are to be used to help others and move us closer to God. As John M. Staudenmaier states:

¹⁸ Kenneth J. Galbraith, *Kingdom and the Two Standards: Some Issues and Reflections* in John E. Dister, ed., *A New Introduction to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 59.

The personal intimacy that liberated me in the First Week makes me capable of love for Jesus, a deepening love that gives me the courage to follow Jesus out into the world. In the First Week I follow Jesus to the broken and violated places of my own life in order to be liberated. In the Second Week I begin to follow Jesus where he calls me into the broken violated places of the larger world. To follow Jesus, then, is to so engage the world and hope for its healing that I am always capable of joy in its beauty and grief over its violence. This sorrow, together with the opposition I will experience when taking stands in the world, will provide me with the “poverty, insults and humiliations” for which I ask in these prayers.¹⁹

As Staudenmaier writes, after a real encounter with Christ during the first week of the Exercises, having experienced his merciful love, his compassionate heart and being a witness of his forgiveness of sin, the retreatant is open to listen to his voice, his call and his mission. The retreatant seeks to discover Jesus Christ as a living person who focuses and unifies all his/her desires and gives ultimate meaning to his/her life.

With the fruit of the first week, sorrow, tears and intense desire for God,²⁰ the retreatant is longing for God in Jesus Christ. His/her heart is unveiled from what was shadowing his/her real need, his/her deepest desire. As one finds in Silf’s work, the deepest desire of every person is God.²¹ “Tree roots go deep because there is always something deeper to strive for.”²²

It is important to note that Ignatius gives a certain liberty of choice about the meditations (SpEx. 162) and about the length of time allowed for prayer (SpEx. 133). What is mandatory is the sequence of meditations or the general direction that the exercitant has to follow.

¹⁹ John M. Staudenmaier, “To Fall in Love with the World. Individualism and Self-transcendence in American life,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 26, no. 3 (1994): 21.

²⁰ Anthony De Mello, *Seek God Everywhere* (New York: Image/Doubleday, 2010), 37.

²¹ Margaret Silf, *Inner Compass: An Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999), 109.

²² *Ibid.*, 112.

As presented above, the Two Standards meditation helps the retreatant to come to a sound election. Furthermore, the Two Standards meditation opens the retreatant to the world and the different forces present inside it. William A.M. Peters states that the aim of this meditation is “to gain insight into what is happening in this world.”²³ Moreover, “Ignatius’ meditation on the Two Standards is meant for his exercitant to attend carefully to the intention of Christ his Lord, which by itself is not a very startling suggestion. But it is followed by the admonition to turn one’s attention to the intention of the enemy of human nature.”²⁴

The exercitant, therefore, must have enough knowledge to choose Christ and reject the enemy. In the third prelude, Ignatius instructs the retreatant to “ask for insight into the deceits of the evil leader, and for help to guard” himself/herself against them; “and further, for insight into the genuine life which the supreme and truthful commander [Christ] sets forth, and grace to imitate him”(SpEx. 139). Here, Ignatius suggests that the retreatant become acquainted with the tactics of Lucifer—his ways of tempting—so that s/he can resist him. At the same time, Ignatius invites the retreatant to an intimate knowledge of Christ in order to imitate him.

In his commentary on the Spiritual Exercises, Peters asserts that “The aim of this meditation, as the third prelude clearly shows, is to study the tactics of the two leaders, Christ and Lucifer.”²⁵ Stanislas Lyonnet sees the meditation of the Two Standards as one Ignatius considered of the greatest importance. He notes: “It belongs to the most primitive core of the Exercises, that is to say, it stems from the spiritual experience of

²³ William A. Peters S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius: Exposition and Interpretation* (Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, 1980), 91.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

Ignatius, incipient at Loyola, which unfolded itself during the six months' solitude he passed at Manresa [...]. We reach then the heart of the spiritual experience of Saint Ignatius and the heart of the Exercises."²⁶

As Lyonnet points out, the Two Standards meditation is essential for Ignatius. It focuses on Christ's method and strategies. It fosters our ability to discern the spirits: the ability to understand the tactics of Lucifer in order "to understand better the tactics of Christ"²⁷ in order to decide with whom to stand. Rahner summarizes the aim of the Two Standards meditations this way: "the meditation on the Two Standards is the first of the so called decision-meditations in the strict sense. At this stage St. Ignatius gives very detailed points. He wants the exercitant to reach a decision that will affect his whole life."²⁸ Therefore, Ignatius asks the exercitant to meditate on the Two Standards and to choose Christ's.

The Two Standards meditation plays an introductory role to the election process-which involves making a choice. The meditation enables the exercitant to reflect on Christ's and Lucifer's values and aims. This meditation provides the opportunity to choose a way of life that helps him or her to attain perfection in his or her vocation.

2. 3. A Call To Stand For and With Lucifer

In the Two Standards meditation, Ignatius places before the exercitant a fundamental choice between the way of Lucifer and the way of Christ. It offers a means of imagining the two conflicting ways of life. The exercitant must decide where he or she

²⁶ Stanislas Lyonnet, S.J., "La Méditation des Deux Etendards et son fondement scripturaire," *Christus* 12 (1956), 435-436.

²⁷ Michael J. O' Sullivan, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola in present-day application. Socio-psychological scriptural-pastoral*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, 1984), 119.

²⁸ Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, 169.

stands. This section presents the exercise related to Satan's call. The Exercises underscore that:

The chief of all the enemies summons innumerable demons and scatters them. Some to one city and some to another throughout the whole world, so that no province, no place, no state of life, no individual is overlooked. He goes around to lay snares for men to seek to chain them. First they are to tempt them to covet riches, as Satan himself is accustomed to do in most cases, that they more easily obtain the empty honors of this world and then come to overweening pride. The first step then, will be riches, the second; honor, the third; pride, from these three steps the one leads to all other vices (SpEx. 141-142).

The meditation on the Standard of Lucifer has three main points. The first point consists of imagining a chief of evil people in a great plain of Babylon sitting on a throne of fire and smoke, revealing his horrible and terrifying nature (SpEx. 140). The second point is to imagine the enemy of our human nature calling countless devils and dispersing "some to one city and others to another and throughout the whole world, without missing any provinces, places, states, or individual persons" (SpEx. 141). The third point is to consider how this chief of evil addresses his people to set snares and chains or traps that tempt people to love riches so that they may live a life of vain glory (honor from the world), and finally to pride (SpEx. 142). Riches, honor and pride are the snares or three steps by which the enemy entices human beings and these lead to other vices.

The devil's strategy, therefore, is to attract people to become attached to riches, which leads to honor and pride and separates a person from his Creator. The contemporary situation is no exception. We live at a time that cherishes wealth, pride, education and prosperity, often making them gods. John A. Hardon asserts that "the devil

will even tempt people to acquire spiritual riches.”²⁹ The victim of this kind of temptation will use spiritual knowledge to praise himself or herself instead of using it to bring people to God.

As a contextual application of the Two Standards meditation, one can see that evil is at work in our world and that its effects are everywhere. The media show us the world’s violence—that people kill others, sometimes even in the name of God, for power. History shows that past wars between countries often occurred for the sake of expansion. People were considered primitive and had to be “civilized.”

The twenty first century has produced a high standard of living for some people. Those who hold doctorates are teaching and doing research in universities around the world. Medicine also made much progress so now we can live longer. Travel has become so convenient that seas and oceans are no longer barriers for moving between continents. Researchers even have explored the moon.

At the same time, violence has increased, as has the suffering of many children, adults, men and women. Human rights seem to have been forgotten in some places. Terrorist Islamic movements use every means to eliminate others and create terror. In other places, the pathologies of power are haunting the leaders of their countries; they kill in order to keep power. In his work *God’s Revelation*, Eberhard Arnold states:

The rule of evil affects all human beings. In our day it has reached massive proportions. We come across it in every form of government, in every church, in every gathering no matter how pious, in all political parties and labor unions, even in family life and in our brotherhood. It has a demonic power that shows up in every one of these structures, however different they may be on the surface. They are pervaded by the inclination

²⁹ John A. Hardon, *The Two Standards Christ and Satan*.
http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Christian_Morality/Christian_Morality_003.htm.
Accessed on May 10, 2016.

to obstinate self-determination, the tendency to present what is one's own as the only thing that counts—one's own person, one's own nation, state, church, sect, party, labor union, one's own family or community—or at least, one's own way of thinking.³⁰

In *De la Violence*, Françoise Héritier shares Arnold's view and summarizes the actual situation in this way:

We live in a time in which violence is right before our very eyes. The word is applied to extremely varied contexts, but each is marked by open violence—by violent acts, fury, hatred, massacres, cruelty, collective atrocities—but also by the cloaked violences of economic domination, of capital-labor relations, of the great North-South divide, to say nothing of all of the “every day” violences perpetrated against the weak: women, children, all those excluded by the social system.³¹

As Héritier underscores, violence is much alive and human dignity at risk. Why does evil seem to govern our world? Are human beings no longer capable of goodness? It should be noted that many of those people doing evil have prestigious university degrees. So, education does not necessarily make people good.

In his book *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, Matthew Kelly points out God's plan for the world. He states: “Transforming people one at a time is at the heart of God's plan for the world. It is also essential to developing dynamic marriages, loving families, vibrant parish communities, thriving economies, and extraordinary nations. If you get the man right (or the woman, of course), you get the world right.”³²

Getting “a person right” means becoming more human (integrity, transparency, full humanity, etc.) and that is God's daily invitation to every person. Every person needs

³⁰ Eberhard Arnold, *God's Revolution: Justice, Community, and the Coming Kingdom* (New York: Plough Publishing, 1997), 4.

³¹ Françoise Héritier quoted in Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 7.

³² Matthew Kelly, *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic* (Hebron, KY: Dynamic Catholic Institute 2012), 9.

to be open to God's transforming power in order to make our world a better place. Our Catholic belief is that it is "God who does the transforming, but only to the extent that we cooperate."³³ Consequently, though evil is currently pervasive in our world, our Christian faith teaches us that it does not have the last word.

As the Exercises teach, the devil uses riches, pride, and honor to attract as many as possible to his standard. We are encouraged to resist it especially when we have great power and serious responsibilities, which can make us proud and arrogant and make us forget that everything we do should be directed to the greater glory of God.

2. 4. A Call To Stand For and With Christ

In presenting Jesus' call in the Two Standards meditation, Ignatius uses the medieval imagery of a person who inspires others by his just and integral life. He fights against injustice, and labors for the oppressed and marginalized. His virtuous life leads to peace. One can think of a Burundian *mushingantaha*. Ignatius presents Jesus' call in this way:

Christ our Lord, the Lord of all the world, chooses so many persons, apostles, disciples and sends them throughout the whole world to spread His Sacred doctrine among all men. No matter what their state or condition may be, the address which Christ our Lord makes to His servants, whom He sends on this enterprise, is to urge them to seek to help everyone. First, by attracting them to the highest spiritual poverty and should it please the Divine Majesty and should He deign to choose them, even to actual poverty. Secondly, by encouraging them to desire insults and contempt, for from these two things comes humility. So then, there are three steps. The first poverty, opposed to riches, the second scorn or contempt, opposed to worldly honor, the third humility, opposed to pride. From these three steps Christ leads them to all virtues (SpEx: 144-146).

³³ Ibid.

It is clear that “Christ’s strategy is the direct opposite of Satan’s.”³⁴ The exercitant is invited “to gaze through the imagination at Christ, the supreme and true leader who cannot mislead.”³⁵ This meditation has also three points. The first point is to imagine Christ, sitting in a simple but beautiful and attractive place near Jerusalem (SpEx. 144). The second point presents Jesus Christ as one who calls his disciples, apostles and all Christians of good will and gives them their mission in the world. The mission is about spreading the Gospel message among people of all walks of life (SpEx. 145). The third point concerns Christ calling his disciples, apostles and his friends to spiritual poverty. He requires of them complete detachment (SpEx. 146). Hardon writes that: “It begins by inspiring His followers and future apostles in every age, in every state of life to practice the first beatitude, ‘blessed are the poor in spirit’, detachment of heart from earthly possessions. And even, if it is God’s will, attracting them to dispossession.”³⁶

While the Lucifer invites people to riches, pride and worldly possessions, Christ invites his followers to poverty and humility. The three points in the meditation on the Standard of Christ are completely the opposite of the three points of the devil. In the Two Standards, William Yeomans summarizes the contrast between Satan and Christ in the following table:³⁷

Satan	Christ
Mortal enemy	Captain and Leader
Deceit, lies, death	Truth and life
Liberty	Slavery
Tries to ensnare and trap	Seeks to help
Riches	Poverty

³⁴ Hardon, *The Two Standards Christ and Satan*.

³⁵ Paul Christian Kiti, ed. *Dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises: African Perspective*. Nairobi: Paulines Publication, 2005), 103.

³⁶ Hardon, *The Two Standards Christ and Satan*.

³⁷ Yeomans, *The Two Standards*.

Honor	Reproaches
Pride	Humility

The table can be misinterpreted if one does not pay attention to the language of the Exercises. To stand for Christ does not mean that one has to follow a set of do and don't rules. Basic needs and a certain comfort level are required for a life with dignity. Nobody prays for reproaches and insults. Jesus requires a total dependence on God.

Though Lucifer suggests riches, honor and pride, Ignatius asks the retreatant not to get attached to anything except God's will. He calls us to *indifference* in order to find God's will (SpEx. 23). By *indifference*, Ignatius does not mean a lack of interest, concern or sympathy. He means to be free from things and not be attached to them. Rahner defines *indifference* in this way: "Indifference is a kind of removal or distance away from things that makes true vision possible and is required for a proper decision."³⁸ Therefore in Ignatius term, indifference is not a negative term, but a positive one.

When Ignatius talks about God's will, he is not talking of a set of pre-packaged formula and commands to impose on us. God's will is that every person finds true life, his or her life, and live it. Concerning God's will, Jean-Marc Laporte writes: "There is a particular will of God for each one of us, and the one who follows Christ makes himself as sensitive as possible to that will, which means a stance of active indifference, of readiness to act in accordance with that will."³⁹

As an application of how to respond to the invitation to stand for Christ, one can find many ways. In the following section, I will present an important attitude, which

³⁸ Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, 23.

³⁹ Jean-Marc Laporte S.J. *The Dynamic Structure of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* http://orientations.jesuits.ca/structure_spexx.pdf, Accessed online May 10, 2016.

constitutes the foundation in standing and following Christ: humility. The second attitude is to imitate Christ in living a virtuous life and third attitude is to go out and work for social justice.

2. 4. 1. Poverty of spirit as the practical expression of standing for Christ

Dyckman and her companions write:

The grace of the Second Week, a deepening relationship with Jesus, offers new ways of knowing, loving and following. What may have begun as an individual “Jesus and me” piety can develop into an intimate relationship of love overflowing into service; the Second Week is about words and actions. The first question, Who do you say that I am? leads to the next, Where do you stand and with whom will you walk? Both questions require a response.⁴⁰

The question, then, is: how does one come to know Christ intimately? It is in embracing Christ’s poverty and humility that we can come to know him. Humility and simplicity defeat the enemy of our human nature. By humility, one recognizes one’s weaknesses and one’s need of divine assistance. Without Christ, we can do nothing (John 15:5). Humility helps the individual to recognize oneself as a creature, and God as God. Then, one comes to know the purpose of one’s life, which is to praise, to reverence, and serve the Lord Our God and by doing this, to save one’s soul (SpEx. 23). Again, humility means a total submission to God’s will, which, at times, can be very demanding. God’s will means following Christ’s call that one be his disciple: “Follow me!” (Mark 1:17; 2:14).

In his book, *Poverty of Spirit*, Johannes Baptist Metz offers a good summary of Christ’s poverty and humility. By poverty of spirit, Metz means the recognition and

⁴⁰ Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed. Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 183.

acceptance of our human condition, our limitation and our dependence on God. Such poverty is a total submission of human finitude before the magnificence of the almighty God. It is a recognition of my true self as a limited person before the infinite God and a gateway to the Creator. Metz considers our incompleteness to be a source of joy, not one of embarrassment. It leads to fullness, to completeness, to our destiny: God. Our incompleteness also leads us to unity with Jesus who emptied himself, became human in all things except sin, and accepted death on the cross, but in the end, rose from the dead, and was united with his father in heaven. This incompleteness makes us religious by nature⁴¹; since by our incompleteness, we can always seek God for help because, as Metz asserts, “we are all beggars.”⁴²

On the one hand, to be awakened to the realization of our radical finitude and sinfulness is to accept our innate condition, which is incompleteness and a proneness to failure. Poverty of spirit also aids in removing our masks, coming to the truth of our being, and surrendering ourselves as sinners. In that case, we will walk the land of freedom with humility and simplicity, knowing that we will never be left alone.

On the other hand, if we live in ignorance of the reality of human finitude, if we do not face this reality of our incompleteness and come to accept it, if we do not take Jesus Christ as our model in emptying ourselves, we will never come to the truth of our being and will die in anxiety.

I found the uniqueness and superiority of poverty insightful. Metz shows that Jesus was tempted through this poverty. We are not exempt from this temptation either. Every person has his or her own mission on earth. Each one of us is created for a unique

⁴¹ Johannes Baptist Metz, *Poverty of Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 26.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 25.

purpose. The temptation is to want to be like others, to look like them and “to be like the rest of humanity.”⁴³ We are different and that constitutes our richness. But, at times, we are afraid to stand alone in our particular mission—afraid of the loneliness. However, we cannot escape from it and have to face it, whether we like it or not.

Because of my uniqueness, I must acknowledge that I have a mission that only I can accomplish. It is a mandate and a command.⁴⁴ Because they live in another culture, experiencing a new language and facing the newness of others, missionaries experience the loneliness of being misunderstood and mistrusted. It challenges their being, because they would love to stay in their comfort zone, where they are with their own and enjoy the warmth of family.

Jesus met this same misunderstanding both in his own hometown and outside. But he moved on, carrying out the mission that he was entrusted with by his heavenly Father. In the same way, we should embrace our vocation, knowing that our mission requires us to correspond to our uniqueness. Our poverty of spirit will enable us to accomplish it with joy and hope.

Poverty of spirit acknowledges our humanity. It is the discovery that we are created by God whom we have to worship, reverence and praise. Our freedom is tied to our connectedness to him whose life is complete. As unfulfilled persons, we need God who is the plenitude who can help us to embrace our inner poverty, our own call, ourselves.

⁴³ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3.

Metz writes that “in accepting the chalice of our existence, we show our obedience to the will of the Creator in heaven; in rejecting it, we reject God.”⁴⁵ In Metz’s view, being in a state of poverty of spirit is already worship. It is the sense of awe that can overtake us when we come to the truth of our own being. We contemplate the truth as it is and we are overwhelmed by the intensity of God’s love and care and we praise our incompleteness which allows us to be in touch with the Creator. We become true to ourselves and to others. We become truly human. We embrace our own state, our vocation, and our poverty.

Metz points out that prayer as communication with God involves an awareness of another person greater than oneself. It is an “I and Thou” relationship. Metz rightly writes that it is only “when we commit ourselves without reserve to the recognition of this ‘Thou’ that we hear ourselves endlessly called to the full, taking possession of that priceless, irreplaceable ‘I’ whom we are each meant to be.”⁴⁶ Here, I note that this ‘I’ is never achieved. We always are becoming human and we are never fully completed until we meet our Creator. Thus, our poverty of spirit, our awareness of who we truly are in God’s presence leads automatically to worship God.

Metz’s emphasis on poverty of spirit helps us to see ourselves as God sees us. We discover that we are limited beings who need help. We become open to our neighbor and to God. We become dependent on others. Discovering our poverty of spirit helps us to realize that we cannot live alone. We appreciate others and realize that they are God’s gifts to us. We are driven by love and respect for ourselves, for our neighbor and for God. We become agents of peace and reconciliation.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 51.

Poverty of spirit opposes pride and arrogance. Once we are aware of our human nature, we do not boast of anything. We know that all we have is a gift from God and that we are never satisfied unless we are in God. Poverty of spirit leads then to empathy, understanding, compassion, and the promotion of social justice. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles, “You know about Jesus of Nazareth and how God poured out on him the Holy Spirit and power. He went everywhere, doing good and healing all who were under the power of the Devil, for God was with him” (Acts 10: 38). Likewise, poverty of spirit helps us to do good to all people and be peacemakers. We heal by loving the poor, encouraging the tired and bringing comfort to the oppressed. In short, poverty of spirit helps us to be God’s ambassadors.

Though poverty of spirit is essential in order to stand for Christ, we need to imitate him in living out all of the other virtues. The following section demonstrates how standing for Christ necessitates a virtuous life.

2. 4. 2. Living a virtuous life: *ubushingantahe* as a way to stand for Christ

In the literal sense of the word, a virtue is a *power*, power as disposition or attitude to achieve moral good with joyfulness and determination.⁴⁷ Every virtue is rooted in God and enables us to connect with our neighbor and with the Creator. At the same time, virtue keeps us together as human beings and unites us as well with God. “Virtues shape the kind of people we are and they are the source of our actions.”⁴⁸ Kelly argues for the importance of virtue for our world and our welfare. He asserts:

⁴⁷ David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 926.

⁴⁸ Fagin, *Putting on the Heart of Christ*, xv.

The worldly influence we are called to exert can so easily distract us from our primary mission of helping people discover God and walk with him [...]. But we need to focus first and foremost on becoming men and women of virtue and character, and leading others to do the same. Every good thing we hope for the world will flow from the reemergence of character and virtue in our lives and in society.⁴⁹

Virtues help us to imitate Christ who asks us to take him as model. “I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you” (John 13:15). Virtues help us become ourselves and strive for perfection. The Principle and Foundation (SpEx. 23) reminds us that every person is created for a purpose and nobody can replace him or her in accomplishing his or her own task. It is of great importance that a person comes to know herself or himself in the light of the Ignatian exercises. Nobody is perfect, but to choose to strive always for perfection is our call. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus summons us: “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Virtue is at the source of every good relationship, be it in marriage, community, or a nation. Virtue ensures the respect of human rights and the care for our universe. Thus, virtues shape one’s way of thinking and provide the power to act for what is right with determination.

All four Gospels present Jesus as a virtuous man. The center of his teaching is the Kingdom of God but he also emphasized the love of God and love of neighbor. “If someone says he loves God, but hates his brother, he is a liar. For he cannot love God, whom he has not seen, if he does not love his brother, whom he has seen” (1John 4:20). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus gives us a good illustration of how one can love his or her neighbor (Luke 10:25-37).

⁴⁹ Kelly, *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, 149.

Jesus' social life indicates that he was a virtuous man who was involved in his community and nation. Love was the grounding principle for Jesus: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31), and he promoted humility in inviting to serve each other: "The first will be last and the last first" (Mark 10:31). Walter Rauschenbush accurately depicts the ethics of Jesus: "The fundamental virtue in the ethics of Jesus was love, because love is the society-making quality. Human life originates in love. It is love that holds together the basal human organization, the family. The physical expression of all love and friendship is the desire to get together and be together. Love creates fellowship."⁵⁰

The social dimension of Jesus' message was to restore not only our broken relationship with God, but also to heal the broken relationships among individuals separated from each other. People did not fail to recognize the political implications of Jesus' words and deeds. He always stood for the truth. He challenged the unjust laws and the unworthy leaders. That is why he was in trouble with those who wanted to kill him and those who sought to eliminate him.

Jesus sets a good example for every person in order to live well both personally and socially. A human being is fundamentally good and generous, and his or her morality consists in being a member of his or her community.⁵¹ Rauschenbusch underscores that "a man is moral when he is social; he is immoral when he is anti-social. The highest type of badness is that which uses up the wealth and happiness and virtue of the community to please self."⁵² In contrast, Jesus constitutes a good example to follow.

⁵⁰ Walter Rauschenbush, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 67.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

Burundi's *bashingantahe* mirror Jesus' example. They were men known as good, gentle, generous, just, with a high sense of respect for the human person. Their main goal was peace and harmony in the country. Nindorera underscores:

The new *mushingantahe* needed a set of virtues such as the sense of equity, honor, respect and commitment required to serve in obedience to the rules that will advance the country. He had to be trustworthy, perspicacious, and courageous, and have love for people, especially the poor and the lonely. The quality of his service to the people and the country would grant him God's rewards and assistance. He was also acting as the representative of God and the king.⁵³

To stand for and with Christ is to live a virtuous life. In other words, it is in practicing *ubushingantahe* that one is called to serve Christ in our world. To stand for and with Christ therefore, is to live a virtuous life and to influence the world. Some of the key virtues perceptible in the life of one who follows Christ are self-knowledge and self-control. The fruits of these virtues are hope, joy and peace.

Self-Knowledge: One way to tend to perfection is in knowing one's strengths and weaknesses. In brief, it is in knowing oneself well enough that one can decide to overcome what is hindering him or her from being good. As a member of a community (family, town, nation), one must keep in mind that Jesus also chooses him or her as an individual person. To stand with and for Christ, therefore, it is of paramount importance that one knows himself or herself.

⁵³ Agnes Nindorera, "Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation in Burundi," Working Paper no. 102, Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights, Boston, 2003.

Self-control: Self-control is also connected to self-realization. Without self-control, one cannot stand for and with Christ. Kelly considers self-control as one of the highest needs of a person.⁵⁴

Hope, joy, and peace: Hope, joy, and peace are the results of virtues for authentic Christian life. For example, because a person is always changing, hope points toward life, whereas despair points toward death. Hope is one of the theological virtues along with *faith* and *charity*. Hope is connected to the future, to desires, to vision, and to the meaning of one's life. All three are connected and interrelated. To be fully human is to live according to the three theological virtues. An integral education should help us to live always with hope.

Everybody is invited to be joyful. Our primary goal in this earthly life is to be joyful. A life full of frustrations and problems loses its meaning. Everybody is called to joy. Joy, however, is not wealth and luxury. It is the result of living according to the truth. The Gospels promise joy and peace, not necessarily happiness. Here I also note that one can only give what he or she has. In order to give joy, one must first have it in oneself.

Peace: Peace is a gift from God. Jesus is the prince of peace. After his resurrection, he appeared to his disciples and greeted them with “peace be with you” (John 20:21). In our earthly life, peace is the cornerstone of our being. We need to live in peace in order to be fully human. For Augustine, peace is the tranquility of order. Without peace, there is war and death. For Paul VI, it is imperative to “arouse in the men of our time and of future generations the sense and love of peace founded upon truth,

⁵⁴ Kelly, *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, 155.

justice, freedom and love.”⁵⁵ Therefore, a virtuous life leads us to become peacemakers. It is only in the darkness of night that one desires the appearance of the light. It is only by experience of war that one admires the beauty of peace. John Macquarie writes about peace in this way: “Peace has an intellectual aspect. It demands intellectual effort, and it demands knowledge. All the good will in the world will never establish peace without hard thinking. In this respect at least, peace is like love.”⁵⁶ As Macquarie writes, every human person is invited to work with determination for the establishment of peace as the Sermon on the Mount reminds us: “Blessed are the artisans of peace, for they shall be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). God’s children are the heirs of God’s kingdom. How then does one inherit it?

To choose to be part of God’s kingdom is to experience a deep desire to be united with and serve Jesus Christ. André Ravier points to a concrete way of following Christ when one is his companion: “His companion is essentially someone who ‘follows Jesus Christ,’ who does the work of Jesus Christ in the world and who works as Jesus Christ did, through Jesus Christ, and with Jesus Christ, for an always greater glory of God; he is a missionary in the manner of the apostles, in intimacy with Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷ As Ravier asserts, Jesus invites us to be his companions, and to imitate his way of life. He urges us to carry out his mission of helping our brothers and sisters find their way back to God.

With regard to Jesus’ invitation, one can assert that the *bashingantahe* of Burundi have generously responded to his call in traditional Burundi. They were completely dedicated to the service of the community. In that respect, Nindorera testifies:

⁵⁵ Paul VI, *Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI for the Observance of a Day of Peace* (January 1, 1968), # 13.

⁵⁶ John Macquarie, *The Concept of Peace* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 9.

⁵⁷ André Ravier, *Ignatius of Loyola and the Founding of the Society of Jesus* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 321.

As God and fathers are always looking out for the good of their people and their children, one can say that those *bashingantahe* were accepted as the right persons to do the right things for the common good. Even though the common good is not clearly defined, it can be read from the recommendations and the obligations. The community had a clear definition of what they would expect from the *mushingantahe*.⁵⁸

In summary, being a companion of Jesus implies practicing *ubushingantahe*, a state of virtues, which helps a human person to point always to something bigger than himself or herself. At the same time, a follower of Christ must be grateful for being chosen notwithstanding his or her sinful condition.

Gratitude for being forgiven and liberated from sin, however, raises three questions: “What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What must I do for Christ?” (SpEx. 53). Aschenbrenner asserts that those questions are for someone who has entered “a school of discipleship,”⁵⁹ “for someone who has come into a whole new orientation of life.”⁶⁰ In discipleship, one enters into a relationship that leads someone deeply into the sentiments, thoughts, and values of another.⁶¹ This requires one’s whole commitment, renouncing one’s own will to embrace another’s will. In our case, it is choosing Christ alone. Marian Cowan and John C. Futrell put it well when they write: “To achieve the kingdom is to labor with Christ to bring all people to express their experience of the presence of Christ within them in their behavior, to other persons, to the world, and to God.”⁶² For example, Ignatius and his first companions labored with Christ

⁵⁸ Nindorera, “Ubushingantahe as a Base for Political Transformation in Burundi.”

⁵⁹ Aschenbrenner, *Stretched for Greater Glory*, 77.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Marian Cowan and John C. Futrell, *Companion in Grace. Directing The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000), 68.

when they set forth to the lands of Europe, India, Brazil and Ethiopia in order to establish or to restore the kingdom of God.⁶³

2. 4. 3. Working for social justice: being *mushingantahe* as a way to stand for Christ

To stand for and with Christ is to work for social justice and to bring true peace for all human beings. So, what do we mean by social justice? Social justice demands that one gives oneself to others. Fr. Pedro Arrupe's phrase, "men and women for others," expresses a deep commitment to social justice. Today, there are some organizations like the Jesuit Refugee Service, social centers for reflection, and educational institutions which offer many opportunities to work for social justice.

Social justice is the translation of our faith into human action. Genuine expressions of faith revolve around concerns for justice and human dignity. "Faith can never be a matter of disembodied words. It must be incarnate in praxis (faith-in-action)."⁶⁴ Social justice is an invitation to all people of good will to open their eyes and ears and respond to the cry of the poor of all kinds in our society.

Justice takes root from Latin word *ius*, which can be translated as *right*. Justice therefore, is concerned with rights and duties that deal with those rights.⁶⁵ Social justice underscores that where there is suffering and oppression, something must be done.

A human being is sacred; we are created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). To stand for Christ is always to strive to dignify human beings. In short, social justice is an application of the Gospel to the structures of society in which human

⁶³ Ravier, *Ignatius of Loyola and the Founding of the Society of Jesus*, 321.

⁶⁴ Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 930.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 942.

relationships take place. In other words, it is faith put into action. In matters related to faith in action, the writer of the letter attributed to James gives us further explanation:

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead (James 2: 14-17).

Social justice is one of the main concerns of Ignatian spirituality. The core of social justice is a respect for human dignity and the promotion of justice among all of God’s people. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6). The Greek word for righteousness can be translated as justice. In that respect, Jesus’ call for being just or righteous implies an invitation to practice justice in every aspect of human existence.

The 1971 Synod of Bishops summoned all human beings to work for justice when it stated: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.”⁶⁶ Indeed, the contemporary world is full of injustices and all people of good will are required to undertake whatever can help bring back peace and respect of human dignity.

On the requirements of our tasks, the same Synod suggests: “Our action is to be directed above all at those men and nations which because of various forms of oppression and because of the present character of our society are silent, indeed voiceless, victims of injustice.”⁶⁷ Oppression was rife throughout the world when the Synod met. The church

⁶⁶ O’Brien and Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought*, 304.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

had to stand for the truth and help the faithful to find appropriate solutions.

In the opening of his encyclical, *The Splendor of the Truth (Veritatis Splendor)*, John Paul II explains: “The splendor of truth shines forth in all the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in man, created in the image and likeness of God. Truth enlightens man’s intelligence and shapes his freedom, leading him to know and love the Lord.”⁶⁸ Truth shapes our freedom and without it we live in slavery. Truth leads to peace and social justice. Truth must be sought with perseverance and genuine humility.⁶⁹

In the 25th chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus gives us the conditions upon which every human being will be judged. He identified himself with the hungry, the naked, the refugees, and the prisoners. Judgment will be based on the care we have shown to the little one, to the poor. The first and the greatest commandment invites us to love God and our neighbor (Mathew 22:36-40). Thus, working for social justice is to make Christ more present in our world. It goes without saying that it requires sacrifice and, sometimes, suffering. It is a way of conquering a world taken over by what Ignatius calls the enemy of human nature.

As pertains to Burundi’s situation of conflict, one can assert that one ray of hope lies in the institution of *bashingantahe*. In the past, *bashingantahe* demonstrated their commitment to social justice. Louis-Marie Nindorera discusses some of the duties entrusted to them: settling disputes by conciliation; reconciling individuals and families; authenticating contracts (in relation to marriage, succession, sale, etc.); overseeing the maintenance of justice; ensuring the security of life and property; providing guidance and

⁶⁸ John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Veritatis Splendor* (1993), # 1.

⁶⁹ Kelly, *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic.*, 876.

balance to politicians; and emphasizing respect for human rights and the common good, whenever the need arose.

The *bashingantahe* strive for freedom, well-being, and peace in society. Because of their strengths, *bashingantahe* are expected to intervene in different situations of conflicts. With the commitment of the heart, the *bashingantahe* seek to be good and to do what is right. In this, they respond to Jesus' call in the Two Standards meditation.

Conclusion

In the traditional Burundian society, the institution of *bashingantahe* served as a rampart against all kinds of abuses and offenses. The *bashingantahe* were virtuous men whose quality of life commanded a lot of respect. When social peace was lost, they played a major role in the reconciliation of conflicting parties. The institution of *bashingantahe* has unfortunately been weakened, and has practically disappeared. This disappearance is partly the result of the colonial encounter that led to the dismantling of many traditional social structures, as well as the outcome of the actions of unscrupulous political leaders, who did not see the influence wielded by the *bashingantahe* in a positive light. Listening to Christ's call in the meditation of the Two Standards can lead Burundians to rediscover and reproduce some of the virtues that were perceptible in the lives of the *bashingantahe*, and which made them such able peacemakers. Christ, the *mushingantahe* par excellence, wants the men and women whom he calls to his service to emulate his virtues. This emulation would transform today's Burundian Christians into modern-day *bashingantahe*, capable of facing the numerous challenges that mar the Burundian society.

In the Two Standards meditation, we see two opposing forces; Lucifer on one hand invites us to worldly riches, honor, power, and pride. Christ on the other hand calls us to be united with him and wants to free us from other earthly riches, which can hinder us from being completely united with him. Through this meditation, Ignatius invites the retreatant to reflect on the struggle that every human person experiences within himself or herself. That struggle is between good and evil—between Satan and the Lord Jesus. Satan, on one hand, attracts his followers by riches, honor, and pride. On the other hand, Jesus invites his followers to poverty and humility and in that way, to stand under his banner. Only in this way does one choose true life.

With regard to the context of Burundi, in order to stand for and with Christ, Burundians need to live a virtuous life as Christ himself did. Love is the first of all the commandments. They need also to live all the other virtues that are connected to the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. As noted earlier, the *bashingantahe* of Burundi are good examples of living a virtuous life. Men for others, their interests are peace and harmony in the country. *Bashingantahe* were known as reconcilers of families and peacemakers. Their philosophy was that the truth must be publically proclaimed.

In the Two Standards meditation, Jesus stands for the values of the Kingdom. For instance, in the Beatitudes and in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructs us in how to live truly. He invites us to simplicity of life, poverty of spirit, peacemaking, selflessness, sharing with others, and solidarity with the poor.⁷⁰ In this, Jesus presents himself as a model of every *mushingantahe* and calls his disciples to emulate the same way of life.

The following chapter argues that in order to respond to Jesus' call, Burundians need to forgive each other and work toward reconciliation. We will examine what

⁷⁰ Gerald M. Fagin, *Putting on the Heart of Christ*, 103.

forgiveness and reconciliation are and proceed to the application with regard to the situation of Burundi. There could be no peace without forgiveness and reconciliation.

CHAPTER 3

***Bashingantahe* at the service of forgiveness and reconciliation**

This chapter examines the way for Burundi to come to peace, harmony, and justice. How does Burundi recover from the ravages of war? How can Burundians come to a full reconciliation among themselves and with God? How does Burundi become once again a country where honey and milk flow, as we used to sing in the past? What is the deepest desire of the Burundians and how can they achieve it?

The answer lies in living out and standing for truth. Jesus himself invites those who believed in him and those who want to believe in him: “If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32).

To be able to stand for the truth and to live it out Burundians need to come to a full reconciliation and forgiveness. Those who have experienced violence and wars know that only forgiveness and reconciliation could heal their wounds. This chapter explores how *bashingantahe* can help in leading Burundians to reconciliation and forgiveness, breaking with the belief that violence will never stop. My belief is that forgiveness is at the heart of Christianity and it goes without saying that it is essential to forgive in order to live freely with God, neighbors and with self.

This chapter depicts a broader view of the way to forgiveness and reconciliation through *ubushingantahe* (a way of being true in testifying to the truth). It proposes *bashingantahe* as TRC members in order to facilitate the process of reconciliation and forgiveness, and also presents the role of the church in the reconciliation procedure.

3. 1. Toward forgiveness and reconciliation through *ubushingantahe*

The *Oxford Companion to the Bible* gives two meanings of the word “forgive.”

The first meaning refers to financial matters and involves the annulment of the obligation to repay what is owed, as in Matthew 18:32. The other meaning is much more frequent and concerns the reestablishment of an interpersonal relationship that has been disrupted through some misdeed. Thus, in Genesis 50:17, Joseph is implored by his brothers to forgive the evil that they did to him.¹

As one can see, both meanings refer to God’s graciousness and pardon of sinners. In forgiving sinners, God gives up the right to seek repayment from sinners; he refuses vengeance. God does not hurt or inflict pain on sinners because of the wrong they have done. He forgives; he pardons.

In the same way, Jesus urges us to forgive because it is the condition for us to be forgiven. He says: “If you do not forgive men their sins, your heavenly Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:15). This means that if one does not forgive his brother or sister, their relationship with God is cut off. As St. John declares: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen (1 John 4:20). In short, without forgiving, one disqualifies oneself from God’s forgiveness.

In his work, *Love in Hard Places*, D. A. Carson invites us to forgive in a way that honors justice. He writes: “Christians are called to abandon bitterness, to be forbearing, to have a forgiving stance even where the repentance of the offending party is conspicuous

¹ Johannes P. Louw, “Forgiveness” in Bruce M. Metzger, Michael D. Coogan (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 232.

by its absence; on the other hand, their God-centered passion for justice, their concern for God's glory, ensure that the awful odium of sin is not glossed over."²

As Carson underscores, forgiveness is always necessary. It is the right thing to do, even when one of the parties refuses to come together. In that case, forgiveness happens to the one who offers it and liberates him or her. But it is reconciliation which does not take place because it entails that both parties to come together in dialogue, to understand each other's opinion and decide together to look to the future and focus on the new possibilities. That is how forgiveness leads to reconciliation.

As already seen, Burundi has a history of conflicts between the Hutu and the Tutsi that has profoundly affected its people. The impact of those wars is manifested in many ways, especially in the cyclical character of violence. John Macquarrie writes: "The root problem of violence is that it treats persons as less than persons, and also that it always leads to more violence as it progressively dehumanizes—or almost always does so. It imprisons those who practice it in a circle which keeps bringing them around once more to square one."³ Indeed, as one of the world's greatest evils, war devalues and dehumanizes human beings.

During the 1993 war, Tutsi were dehumanized, and they were called "cockroaches, and snakes to be killed." Macquarrie hits the mark: violence treats persons as less than persons. Survivors are deeply wounded people in need of support and healing. The perpetrators have also been dehumanized in dehumanizing other human beings and are in need of healing and restoration through forgiveness and reconciliation.

² D. A. Carson, *Love in Hard Places* (Wheaton, ILL: Crossway, 2002), 83.

³ John Macquarrie, *The Concept of Peace* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 53.

In order for forgiveness and reconciliation to happen, Burundians must sit together, tell the truth and forgive one another. In the past, the traditional reconciliation practice made use of the *bashingantahe*. They were efficient because they listened to both parties and rendered impartial justice. They helped them to reconcile and at the end, the *bashingantahe* asked those who were conflicting to shake hands and drink from the same pot. This shaking of hands and the sharing from the same pot symbolized that forgiveness and reconciliation had taken place. Now they could start anew, focusing on the future and trying to forget the past.

With the unrest that the country is experiencing, the only way to come to peace and harmony is forgiveness and reconciliation. The *bashingantahe* must engage, in an open dialogue, Hutu and Tutsi who have endured hardships or who have lost their relatives. Those who lost loved ones need to know the truth about them, how they died and, if possible, to access their remains. The perpetrators have the obligation to ask for forgiveness and do reparations, if it is possible. The survivors and perpetrators have to drink from the same pot and become friends again. The way to healing for Burundi lies in telling each other the truth.

3. 2. *Bashingantahe* as members of TRC at the service of reconciliation

The current crisis in Burundi is a consequence of a painful past of violation of human rights, which was not resolved. As time goes on, the memories of this horrendous period, and the impunity that followed, give rise to a desire for revenge and perpetuate the cycle of violence. For example, the violence of 1962, 1972, 1988 and 1993 should be addressed in order for the victims to find justice and the perpetrators to ask for

forgiveness. It is clear that Burundi will never recover peace unless the truth about the people who were killed during the past crises is not addressed and information shared about them.

The members of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) should be *bashingantahe*, known as truthful, trustworthy and integrated. This means that the members of TRC⁴ should be chosen from the institution of *bashingantahe* and not by the government. As for their mission, they can first unblock the current inter-political crisis through dialogue, and then, proceed to past unresolved questions in order to ensure a lasting peace.

From past experiences, TRC has used many mechanisms in different countries. The TRC in Burundi could take one model among many. For example, in Chile, the TRC recommended symbolic and financial reparations.⁵ In Panama, TRC was in charge of inquiring into human rights abuses committed from the October 1968 *coup d'état* to 1989.⁶ In Haiti, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide created a TRC in order to estimate the number and cause of deaths following political violence. An important recommendation from TRC was “a request to the UN Security Council, to set up an International Tribunal for Crimes of the de facto, Government”⁷ and others with very divergent goals and responsibilities. In Rwanda, the traditional court “*gacaca*” played the role of a TRC. For many Rwandese, *gacaca* was linked with healing, rebuilding individual lives and the whole country after what happened during the genocide. *Gacaca* gave the opportunity for

⁴ In 2015, the president of Burundi Pierre Nkurunziza appointed five members in charge of TRC. Many Burundians do not approve that Commission because of their political affiliation. They should be chosen among the institution of *bashingantahe* who are known as people of integrity and peacemakers.

⁵ P. B. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 167.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 251-252.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

survivors to express themselves, to question and to have some knowledge about their loved ones who died during this tragedy. It was also an occasion for perpetrators to ask for forgiveness in order to be part of the community again.⁸

Gacaca in Rwanda was a great help because the survivors could know where the victims were buried during the genocide and they were able to give them homage and rebury them with dignity. This is a healing act. Every year in Rwanda, many remains are still exhumed and reburied with dignity by survivors and friends. Though this seems to be a traumatizing experience, it contributes to reconciliation and the healing process.

In the case of Burundi, one might suggest the Rwandese model in using the institution of *bashingantahe* as members of TRC. In fact, in Burundi as in Rwanda, people know each other, especially those who live in the same area. Those who have lost their relatives could come and discuss publicly and the perpetrators could explain the wrong they did and ask for forgiveness with the hope of being forgiven.

The *bashingantahe*, who know well the Burundi's culture, could help in that process. For example, they know that Burundians do not openly say what they think. During the time of TRC session, survivors should try to tell the truth as it happened, without hiding anything. Only the truth will save the country. The *bashingantahe* would insist on the importance of telling the truth in order to liberate the country from any harm and to prevent future violence.

In order for Burundi to recover from the ravages of war and hatred, there is a great need of Christian *bashingantahe* who testify to the truth not only from a cultural

⁸ Bert Ingeraere, "International Institute for Democracy and electoral assistance, The Gacaca Court," in *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experience*, Luc Huyse, Mark Salter, eds. (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2008), 25-59.

perspective, but also from a Christian viewpoint. Burundi needs minister *bashingantahe* who can help God's people to come to the knowledge of the Gospel, and who are spiritually well-formed and informed. The Christian *bashingantahe* would carry out their mission with zeal and joy. They would love people entrusted to them and share their joy and pain. The Christian *bashingantahe* are members of the community who know their people, their weaknesses and their strengths. It is by their way of relating to people that Christian *bashingantahe* will attract them. The saying that "actions speak louder than words" applies more to Christian *bashingantahe* and pastors than to anyone else.

A Christian *mushingantahe* is compassionate and merciful. His main characteristics are love, understanding, mercy, and joy. He has Jesus Christ as his master and example. People should find in him a loving and a caring father. He should be a source of joy, comfort, and hope.

Like Jesus, a good Christian *mushingantahe* must be totally dedicated to his mission. To his disciples who implored him to eat something, Jesus said: "my food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34). He was totally devoted to his mission—that was his joy and happiness. Jesus also sacrificed his life for his people. Like his master, a good Christian *mushingantahe* sacrifices his life for the people entrusted to him.

Addressing a group of newly appointed bishops on September 19, 2013, Pope Francis reminded them: "We are called and constituted pastors, not pastors by ourselves but by the Lord; and not to serve ourselves but the flock that has been entrusted to us, and to serve it to the point of laying down our life, like Christ, the Good Shepherd."⁹ Pope Francis emphasized that to be pastor is first of all fulfilling a vocation from the Lord and

⁹ Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy, A Vision for the Church* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2014), 85.

a mission to serve our brothers and sisters in the world.

A good Christian *mushingantahe* does not work alone in his mission. He works in close collaboration with ministers of the Gospel. They should be men and women of integrity and good reputation. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis reminds us: “All of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth.’”¹⁰ All of us are called to be the preachers of God’s kingdom.

Once again, Pope Francis emphasizes: “an urgent need, then, to see once again that faith is a light, and once the flame of faith dies out, all other lights begin to dim. The light of faith is unique, because it is capable of illuminating *every* aspect of human existence. A light this powerful cannot come from us but from a more primordial source: in a word, it must come from God.”¹¹

In a country wounded by many civil wars, the light of faith, hope and love needs to be enkindled in people’s hearts. The wounds caused by violence take time to heal. Though the war situation happened and is happening even now in Burundi, we should not be discouraged. Life will triumph over death, light will overcome darkness, and love will triumph over hatred.

In summary, Christian *bashingantahe* appear to be an important remedy for many of Burundi’s problems. *Bashingantahe* must be restored and implement a program to re-educate our youth to become men and women of integrity. The institution of *bashingantahe* has proved that peace and justice lie in embracing a virtuous life. Every country needs virtuous people to guide others especially, the youth.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, # 19.

¹¹ Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*, 7.

The Christian *bashingantahe* are a powerful tool for Burundian society to recover peace and justice. They imbue the society with trust and a vision of hope in the future. They stand for truth. As noted earlier, they stand for Christ by helping the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the underprivileged. The *bashingantahe* need to be restored in Burundi because they represent what Christ; the true *mushingantahe*, is calling us to be and to do as commanded in the Two Standards meditation.

3. 3. The role of the church in the reconciliation process

Despite the tumultuous political situation, Burundian people believe in God. The way they name their children testifies to that faith. Many names end with “Mana” which means “God.” For example: Havyarimana (God is the giver of life); Hakizimana (God heals); Hatungimana (God sustains); Harerimana (God brings up); Hatangimana (God provides), etc. In Burundi, God is ever present in our conversations, joys and also pain. During our reconciliation process, it would be wrong to keep God out of such a noble task, since He is the Reconciler par excellence.

The church of Burundi could help people to come to reconciliation with God because the acts against human rights primarily offend God who is the giver and sustainer of life. It is only in reconciling with God that reconciliation with one another will be possible. The church of Burundi is invited to stress love in its teaching, as the apostle John insists upon: “anyone who does not love, does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

In a world full of indifference and consumerism, love seems to lose its place. Without love, we lose the essence and the purpose of our lives. A world without love is a

world without God, a world characterized by hatred, violence, and injustice at all levels. Love is the virtue that best expresses the heart of Christianity. Love makes us more human and more open to the divine gifts. Love is one of the three theological virtues, along with faith, and hope. By theological virtues, the Catholic Church means the foundation of Christian moral life. For McBrien, among the three theological virtues, “love is a lived faith and a lived hope.”¹²

Love is also Jesus’ new commandment and a characteristic of his disciples: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13: 34-35).

If one wants to understand the qualities of love, it is important to read the apostle Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians: “Charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Charity does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Francis Cardinal Arinze’s book, *Reflecting on Our Priesthood, Letter to a Young Priest*, illustrates the need of teaching God’s love to God’s people. He writes:

The summary of the Law and the Prophets, and the heart of the new Covenant inaugurated in the Blood of Christ, is love of God and love of neighbor, which it necessarily includes. This love is to be lived by each person according to his vocation and mission in the Church and in the world.¹³

¹² Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 937.

¹³ Francis Cardinal Arinze, *Reflecting on Our Priesthood, Letter to a Young Priest* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009), 17.

The teaching of the church of Burundi should concentrate on this. The love of God and the love of neighbor should be the cornerstone of how the church's representatives live and preach. Priests and religious should be icons and sacraments of Jesus Christ, and the light, which points to the Creator from whom the creatures receive their being. With regard to Burundian events then and now, the church must help change the situation by bringing faith, hope, and love.

During their *ad limina* visit on May 7, 2014, Pope Francis urged the bishops of Burundi to proclaim the Gospel to civil society and to commit themselves to the promotion of justice and reconciliation. Pope Francis stressed that “The Burundian people are still too often divided, and deep wounds are not yet healed.”¹⁴ The healing of these wounds and the end of the divisions will come about by a real and true forgiveness and reconciliation. Here, we recall that reconciliation and forgiveness depend first of all on the spirit of prayer. Pope Francis reminds us: “the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others.”¹⁵ As Pope Francis states, Burundians need to embrace others through forgiveness and reconciliation in order to rebuild a lasting peace.

During the same occasion, Pope Francis said to the bishops of Burundi: “I invite you to not falter in hope, but to go forward courageously with a renewed missionary spirit, to bring the Good News to all those who are still waiting or who most need to finally know the Lord's mercy.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Catholic News Agency, “Evangelize to Heal Wounds, Pope Francis encourages Burundi bishops,” May 7, 2014.
<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/evangelize-to-heal-wounds-pope-encourages-burundi-bishops/>
Accessed May 10, 2016.

¹⁵ Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, # 39.

¹⁶ Catholic News Agency, “Evangelize to Heal Wounds, Pope Francis encourages Burundi bishops,” May 7, 2014.

Pope Francis urged Burundian Bishops to offer hope. Hope opens the doors to something greater. Hope is the innermost energy that helps us to move on, that pushes us always ahead. Hope is having confidence and trusting our own experience. Hope enables us always to find the meaning of our life.

In *Why Do We Hope? Images in the Psalms*, Daniel J. Harrington defines hope as “a desire accompanied by the possibility of, or belief in, its realization. Hope has an object or focus, looks toward the future, and has a basis or ground in reality. As a theological virtue, hope has God as its origin, object, and ground.”¹⁷ The people of Burundi, who have long suffered from the atrocities of war and division, need a word of comfort and hope. They need to know that the time of darkness will not last forever—that the light will appear one day. They also have to know that it is their responsibility to welcome that light by forgiving each other and promoting what unites rather than what separates them.

In order to restore peace, the church of Burundi must start by giving hope to Burundian youth. Without hope, there is no vision and no development in any aspect of life: moral, intellectual, religious, or social. Hope is the key to daily living. Without hope, there is no future and no life. Hope is the guiding principle for a human being’s ability to make decisions. In *A Closer Walk with Christ: A Personal Ignatian Retreat*, Raymond Gawronski writes: “what a delightful thing it is to have hope, to harbor a vision in one’s heart!”¹⁸ Hope is a dynamic process that opens people to yearn for something good, better, progress, and the like.

¹⁷ Daniel J. Harrington, *Why Do We Hope? Images in the Psalms* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 101.

¹⁸ Raymond Gawronski, *A Closer Walk with Christ: A Personal Ignatian Retreat* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003), 85.

What Burundians need more is a growing awareness that youth are needed because they are the future and hope of the country. Youth are to be the agents of reconciliation. What the Church must do first and foremost is to build hope in the hearts of Burundian youth. They have experienced war and its consequences. Thus, they can work against war and become peacemakers. But what does peace mean? How can the church of Burundi build peace?

John Macquarrie, who wrote on the concept of peace, states: “All of this means that peace has an intellectual aspect. It demands intellectual effort, and it demands knowledge. All the good will in the world will never establish peace without hard thinking. In this respect at least, peace is like love.”¹⁹ Here, we note that the church’s task is not easy. We have to involve the whole person in the search for peace. We have to use our spiritual, intellectual and moral gifts to search for and build peace. Macquarrie urges us to “be an agent of reconciliation,”²⁰ and suggests that every person has to reconcile with himself or herself to be able to engage in reconciliation with others. And that happens only through dialogue and communication.²¹ Though they have been wounded by war, Burundian youth have to learn to be agents of reconciliation. They have to reconcile with themselves and others.

The second element that Macquarrie suggests is to “be politically and socially responsible.”²² This is not easy for simple citizens. Our voice does not weigh much and our influence is limited. Nevertheless, our personal commitment to truth is required for change. We need simple voices that cry out for peace, reconciliation, and truth.

¹⁹ Macquarrie, *The Concept of Peace*, 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

²² *Ibid.*, 79.

Macquarrie states that in a situation of dehumanization “to serve the cause of peace in such situations is to try to humanize the thought and action of these social groups.”²³ To humanize the dehumanized is our call as Christians and believers.

The third element needed for peace according to Macquarrie is the exercise of restraint in one’s material standard of living.²⁴ Simply put, Macquarrie calls us to moderation in our daily living. Moderation is a sign of a reconciled person, a whole person, and one who moderates his or her consumption.

The fourth and the last element is “to pray for peace.”²⁵ According to Macquarrie, this element is very important because people who pray for peace become transformed and peacemakers.²⁶ To pray for peace is “to bring into the human situation the very power of the God of peace, or, better expressed, to open up our human situation to that power.”²⁷ To pray for peace makes us good citizens who labor for harmony, development of mind and heart and people who are willing to work for progress. Prayer also engenders forgiveness so that those who were enemies become friends again. In that line, Desmond Tutu asserts:

There is hope that a new situation could come about when enemies might become friends again, when the dehumanized perpetrator might be helped to recover his lost humanity. This is not a wild irresponsible dream. It has happened and it is happening and there is hope that nightmares will end, hope that seemingly intractable problems will find solutions and that God has some tremendous fellow-workers, some outstanding partners out there.²⁸

Forgiveness is essential to establishing peace. A human being is always a

²³ Ibid.,

²⁴ Ibid., 80.

²⁵ Ibid., 81.

²⁶ Ibid.,

²⁷ Ibid.,

²⁸ Desmond Mpilo Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 158.

mystery, capable of many good things, but evil as well. We need to enlarge our hearts and always to forgive. But forgiveness does not remove our responsibility for wrongdoing. That is why forgiveness is accomplished only when the one who has committed wrong takes responsibility and makes restitution for it, if possible. Burundians have to know the truth of what happened and why they have come to that extreme of losing hope in themselves and in the future. Loss must be accepted, forgiveness given, and openness to the future maintained.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the ways in which Burundians could come to forgiveness and reconciliation in order to enjoy a lasting peace. As defined, forgiveness means restoring the bonds of friendship and intimacy when there has been a division. When a quarrel occurs between people, the bond of friendship is broken and they tend to reduce the others to objects without value. Forgiveness comes to unite and restore that friendship and respect for a human dignity. It overlooks the sin and restores the bond of friendship. Forgiveness gives back to perpetrators the sacredness of their lives.

As noted, forgiveness leads to reconciliation. One can say that reconciliation is forgiveness put into reciprocal action. One forgives in order to reconcile with his or her friend. Reconciliation is the goal. Forgiveness is fulfilled in reconciling one another. Though forgiveness is hard, it is important to forgive one another in order to be free and live a happy life. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the conditions for being at peace and in harmony.

With regard to the situations of past and current unrest in Burundi, we noted that forgiveness and reconciliation would set again the country on the right path. The institution of *bashingantahe* would help in settling the TRC and help Burundians to come out of themselves and re-unit again through forgiveness and reconciliation. The traditional system of Burundi's reconciliation insists on drinking again from the same pot. This symbolizes the starting of a new life between the offender and the victim, looking to the future with hope and trying to move beyond the past.

The church of Burundi could play an important role in the process of reconciliation. We pointed out that, because many Burundians are believers, the major thing to do is to increase their hope in a bright future. The church could help Burundians to come to a complete and authentic acceptance of one another, despite the transgressions they have done to one another. Forgiveness and reconciliation occur only with a spirit of humility and prayer. It is only in forgiving one another and living in humility that Burundians will heal their wounds and transform their country in order to live in peace.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Thomas Merton writes:

Christians must become active in every possible way, mobilizing all their resources for the fight against war. Peace is to be preached and nonviolence is to be explained as practical method. Prayer and sacrifice must be used as the most effective spiritual weapons in the war against war, and like all weapons, they must be used with deliberate aim: not just with a vague aspiration for peace and security, but against violence and war. This implies that we are also willing to sacrifice and restrain our own instinct for violence and aggressiveness in our relations with other people... This is the great Christian task of our time.¹

Thomas Merton makes an appeal to every Christian, married, single, lay, or religious, to be responsible for opposing violence and war. We have to stand for peace and justice in the world. In other words, Merton invites us to eschew a culture of violence and war in order to embrace peace and harmony and see every person as a brother or a sister because only in that way, will we enjoy the fullness of life. In fact, it is our vocation, because “we are those made for goodness, for love, for compassion, for God, and yes, our hearts will remain forever restless until we find our true rest only in God.”²

This thesis looked into and suggested ways in which Burundi can achieve peace and harmony, which has been lacking since the cycle of violence from the time of its independence in 1962. That cycle of violence weakened Burundians in matters related to poverty, human rights, and human dignity. Peace is one of God’s greatest gifts. Every human being, especially Christians, should seek, acquire, welcome, and wholeheartedly cherish it. Jesus himself praises peace in the Sermon on the Mount. He says:

¹ Thomas Merton quoted in John Dear, *Toward a Vow of Nonviolence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 123.

² Rowan Williams, *Where God Happens, Discovering Christ in One Another* (Boston: New Seeds, 2007), viii.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons and daughters of God... You have learned how it was said: “you must love your neighbor and hate your enemy”; but I say to you, “Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. In this way, you will be sons and daughters of your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:9; 43-45).

One of the ways Burundi will recover peace is through the institution of *bashingantahe*, men of integrity who helped the country from the 17th century until recently. The institution of *bashingantahe* has suffered from self-seeking presidents looking only for their interests. They rejected the institution of *bashingantahe* and chose the ways of injustice, corruption, and violence. Such action must cease, if truth and peace are to prevail in Burundi.

Through the lens of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, especially the Two Standards meditation, this thesis tried to highlight that the *bashingantahe* are very important because they respond to what Jesus is calling us to stand for: the truth. With a similar view, John Dear asserts: “Gandhi taught that Truth is God. Truth is to be revered, to be loved in humility, and to become the ground and the rock of existence.”³ Truth must be sought by listening to others and discerning the quality of wisdom in our conversation. Searching for truth requires patience, eagerness, and sometimes suffering.

Thus, it is only in cultivating the culture of truth that a lasting peace will be established in Burundi. As noted, truth goes along with other virtues, especially love, because as John Dear asserts, “love is not compatible with violence in thought, word or deed.”⁴ The *bashingantahe* of Burundi are trained to love, which helps them to serve their

³ Dear, *Toward a Vow of Nonviolence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

brothers and sisters without counting the cost. As the risen Christ is the prince of peace and the true *mushingantahe* by his deeds and his words, having Christian *bashingantahe* would be a treasure for Burundi, which has suffered from hatred and division for many years.

The last chapter treated the role that *bashingantahe* must play in the reconciliation process. Reconciliation goes hand in hand with healing, and the possibility of living side by side again. The Christian *bashingantahe*, who know the culture and what is needed in their country, could help the two conflicting parties to come together and try to become friends again. *Gacaca*, the Rwandese TRC model could be proposed in Burundi, because Rwanda and Burundi have many things in common: culture, language, the same ethnic groups (Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa), and even the same type of conflicts.

Reconciliation is first and foremost, an act of God. The church of Burundi must take part in the reconciliation process, reminding the faithful of the importance of their commitment especially the greatest of the commandments: love. Teilhard de Chardin asserts that “love alone is capable of uniting beings in such a ways as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in themselves.”⁵ Love of God and neighbor is the source of reconciliation.

The church of Burundi must stand firm and teach by words and also by deeds. With the violence and injustice that has ravaged Burundi for more than 40 years, Christian values have faded and been uprooted. The church needs to bring Gospel values back. Reconciliation is impossible without values such as understanding, empathy, forgiveness, pursuit of justice, and truth-telling.

⁵ Jean Maalouf, *Teilhard de Chardin. Reconciliation in Christ: Selected Writings* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 14.

A country devastated by violence, injustice, and war needs truthful people who can eradicate evil and establish peace. Burundi needs people who can stand for truth alone. In that case, full reconciliation will happen and a lasting peace will prevail.

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