

Living Letter to Kentucky Council of Churches Annual Assembly October 28, 2004

Good afternoon. I'm Sally Laylo from the Philippines. I'm one of the World Council of Churches scholars here in the United States, and I'm studying at Lexington Theological Seminary. It is indeed a great privilege for me to be a part of this conference, a gathering of wonderful people, and be given the opportunity to share with you something about "the power and promise of peace."

"Kapayapaan." Kapayapaan is a Filipino word which is equivalent to the English word "peace." Would you please repeat it with me? ... Great. Thanks a lot for your participation.

I was informed that your conference theme is "Planted in Faith; Growing in Love." Well, how can we relate it with peace, with the power and promise of peace? I believe that because we have Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, as the author and finisher of our faith, we are planted in faith, and that we believe in "the power and promise of peace." Likewise, we have faith in Jesus Christ who showed His love and is continuously showing His love to us in many ways; that's why, as followers of Him, we also want to grow in love. Like Him, we want to be proponents and nurturers of peace, through loving God and through loving others as ourselves.

Though I acknowledge the fact that it's hard to talk about peace, that it's hard to talk about "the power and promise of peace" while we are in the midst of war and violence (i.e. like the ongoing war in Iraq). However, as a part of God's people who are "planted in faith and growing in love," we do not lose hope. We have faith that since it is by God's mercy that we are in the ministry of peacemaking, we don't lose hope, because what is impossible for us is possible for God.

I remember last September 11, 2003, I was privileged to be a part of an ecumenical/interfaith gathering that was held in Lexington, Kentucky. Though the 11th day of September reminds us of an overwhelming violence, on that date, September 11, 2003, we have gathered not to create violence, but to promote peace. We prayed together, shared symbols of peace, and we tried to encourage people to love peace and to nurture it, and to overcome violence by being peacemakers. That gathering, the WCC gathering, this gathering, and other peacemaking gatherings, make me hopeful, that despite the violence that we had experience, and still experiencing, still, there's "the power and promise of peace."

Likewise, I remember that in 1986, the Filipino people were able to oust a violent and dictatorial president, through a non-violent revolution. We were able to restore peace in our country, not through the use of tanks, not through the use of bombs and guns, but through the use of weapons of peace—love and prayers, and through our hope in God and in "the power and promise of peace."

Like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I believe that we can still have a dream—a dream that someday "the power and promise of peace" will be fulfilled. As a part of

God's people, may we be reminded that we have to do our part so that our hopes and dreams of having a peaceful world will be fulfilled. Likewise, may we be peacemakers, so that we will be called children of God. May peace begin with you and me. As Mother Teresa has said: Peace is not something we wish for, it's something we make, something we do, something we are, something we give away. We can always say that we wish, that we want peace, for all people and for the whole world. Yet, wishing and wanting peace is one thing, and doing things to bring about peace is another thing.

In accordance to your conference theme and text, I pray that according to the riches of God's glory, God may grant that we may be strengthened in our inner being with power through God's Spirit. I pray that as God's people planted in faith, as God's people growing in love, as God's people who want to nurture peace and overcome violence, through God's mercy, and grace, we will be God's ambassadors of love and peace, that we will be God's "living and fruitful trees," and that time will come that we will be able to celebrate "the power and promise of peace."

Thank you very much and may the peace of God that passes all understanding be with us all.