

*Reminders and Resources for the fall 2024 Homily Series*

**Peaceful Dialogue**

Week One — How to Begin

**Dialogue is** a conversation between two or more people; an exchange of ideas and opinions; a discussion aimed at resolution among parties in conflict. It requires peace.

**Dialogue is NOT** a debate it's NOT about winning an argument; it's NOT a shouting match; it's NOT a personal attack because you don't like another's viewpoint. For dialogue to really be peaceful we need to come to the table with mature behavior.

Gospel Connection (MK 10:2–12). In this Gospel story, we see the Pharisees testing Jesus on the teaching of divorce. Jesus tells them that the only reason Moses allowed divorce was due to the hardness of their hearts. He then reiterates God's design for marriage, saying the two shall become one.

*Jesus wants us to put our relationships first. Just as he is calling the Pharisees out for having hard hearts, so too is he calling us out. We live hard-heartedly when we act with arrogance, think we have all the answers, and are closed off to others' perspectives.*

*No matter the kind of relationship, we humans will always have differences with one another. Whether we can manage those differences peacefully and preserve the relationship is up to us and how we treat each other. Our differences can lead to evolutionary growth or they can lead to destruction. Peaceful dialogue can actually help **soften hearts**, and it puts us on a productive path of building God's kingdom on earth.*

How to Begin:

**1. Start with Tolerance.** Tolerance is an entry point to dialogue. Be willing to accept that someone sees it differently than you. *Soften your heart* just enough to let someone have an opinion different than your own without getting combative. Step out of the echo-chamber you might be in to acknowledge there is another way of looking at things. Make room for other views. Give them a seat at the table and be civil about it.

**2. Remember People are Complex.** When we keep in mind that all of us are complex, that we all live with contradictions, we can begin to take a broader view of each other. We can *soften our hearts* just a little bit more by no longer making quick judgements.

Every one of us has a context which has formed us. Viewing people in their complexity helps us better uphold their dignity. Our shared humanity reminds us to treat one another with the same respect and reverence we all desire and deserve. Also, acknowledging the complexity of people enhances our capacity to show them hospitality, which in turn fosters an environment conducive to peaceful dialogue. It requires us to see the God-given worthiness of another, despite our differences.

**3. Get Curious and Listen.** The next step in *softening our hearts* is to get curious. Ask the person with whom you disagree about their viewpoint. Be careful to not disparage or make negative assumptions; just listen. You can simply say “please tell me more,” and then let them speak. Practice reflective listening by repeating back to them, in your own words, what you think they are saying. Let go of the urge to form your response while they’re talking, and simply be present to their sharing.

“Questions are what heal the world because they lead to understanding,” says teacher Beth O’Riordan. Understanding someone else’s opinion does not mean you agree with it. Rather, understanding lends itself to empathy, compassion, working together, and creative problem solving.

If something is really true, then it is true. Truth needs no defense in the sense that one does not have to defend it, or prove it, for it to be so. Therefore let go of trying to prove something, and instead search for insight into another’s perspective. Stay calm and centered on learning.

***STOP*** if you find yourself getting triggered and reactive. Press the pause button and say you’d like to continue the conversation another time. Then, when you feel more grounded in peace, you can try again.

“Rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” — Proverbs 12:18

Resources:

- Skills for Dialogue — [https://www.usccb.org/resources/Skills-for-Dialogue-in template EN.pdf](https://www.usccb.org/resources/Skills-for-Dialogue-in-template-EN.pdf)
- Loving Our Neighbor through Dialogue — [https://www.usccb.org/resources/Loving Our Neighbor Through Dialogue.pdf](https://www.usccb.org/resources/Loving-Our-Neighbor-Through-Dialogue.pdf)
- *Compassionate Conversations — How to Speak and Listen from the Heart*, by Diane Musho Hamilton, Gabriel Kaigen Wilson, and Kimberly Myosai Loh
- *Say What You Mean: A Mindful Approach to Nonviolent Communication* by Oren Jay Sofer
- *Making Conversation: Seven Essential Elements of Meaningful Communication* by Fred Dust

★ Book by Rita George-Tvrtković, our speaker on interreligious dialogue: *Christians, Muslims, and Mary: A History*

Prayer: ***Jesus, Prince of Peace, help us soften our hearts so that we can tolerate our differences. Help us look upon one another with compassion for our complexities and contradictions. Give us the courage to ask sincere questions and listen receptively with patience, respect, and a desire to learn. And ultimately give us the wisdom to uphold the dignity of one another with a loving peace that transcends our differences. Amen.***