

Reminders and Resources for the fall 2024 Homily Series

Peaceful Dialogue

Week Two — Why Bother Trying?

Gospel Connection (Mk 10:17-27). In this week's Gospel, a man asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Although he had been following the commandments, Jesus instructs him to take one additional step, "sell what you have, and give to the poor." The man "went away sad, for he had many possessions."

This story highlights the difficulties we face due to our attachments. We tend to hold tightly to our status, possessions, identities, and opinions. However, Jesus urges us to relinquish such things if we genuinely seek to enter the kingdom of God. Through the lens of practicing peaceful dialogue, we are reminded that we cannot harvest the fruits of dialogue if we are not willing to surrender our attachments — to the ego, to the need to be right, to the desire for superiority. We must become humble.

Why Bother Trying (to engage in peaceful dialogue)?

1. It's What We're Called to Do. The great Commandment Jesus gave us is to love God and to love one another. That's the ultimate goal of dialogue for a Christian. And how do we love someone whose viewpoint drives us bonkers? There is a saying, "There's no one you couldn't love once you've heard their story." So listen to their story and try not to judge. In other words, we need to put our Christian values over personal conflicts or ego-driven behaviors. We need to remember that before all else we are followers of Christ, called to Love not just our neighbors but our enemies too.

2. Relationships are most important. God is a trinity of divine relationship, and we are made in God's image and likeness. Put simply, we are made for relationships of all kinds. They give us meaning and purpose. Peaceful dialogue helps to preserve our relationships and a sense of community because, when we enter into another's experience, we grow closer to them regardless of whether or not we agree. We show them we care enough to hear and consider their perspective. We treat them with dignity and respect. And in this process we cultivate empathy and compassion, two essential ingredients for healthy relationships.

3. We just might be surprised by what we learn. If we believe that God is creatively present in each human being's experience, then we ought never underestimate the power of peaceful dialogue. Dialogue allows us to recognize our shared humanity as we learn about one another. It fosters reconciliation because as we educate ourselves on other perspectives, we minimize misunderstanding and sometimes even ignorance. Not to mention, when we engage constructively in dialogue, we open the door to creative problem-solving and unexpected solutions. The dialectical method between two people or groups has the potential to form a synthesis of something greater than what either side could have imagined. In other words, we are better together.

The opposite of dialogue is often war of some kind. Whether it's estrangement, a family feud, or an act of violence, whenever we reject peaceful dialogue there is suffering and strife. Consider the many wars throughout history and the ones going on right now. What if the two sides could have come to the table to dialogue long *before* anyone were to die? Remember Jesus' words: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." The aim is clear. We bother trying to dialogue because we are to make peace in our world. It is what our faith asks of us.

"Practitioners of nonviolence seek to become their truest selves by slowly learning to love all beings, confident that all are kin and that we are called to embody this kinship concretely, especially in the midst of our most difficult and challenging conflicts."

— Ken Butigan

Resources

Key Catholic documents provided from our guest speaker, Dr. Rita George-Tvrtković:

- *Nostra Aetate* (On the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions, 1965) — https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html
- *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism, 1964) — https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html
- *Dialogue and Proclamation* (On the need to both listen to others share their faith and share our own.) — (1991) https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html
- *Fratelli Tutti* (Pope Francis's encyclical on brotherhood, social friendship, and the "culture of encounter," 2020) — https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html
- NOTE: You can reach Dr. Rita via email at RGeorge-Tvrtkovic@ben.edu

★ DuPage United — An organization of civil society institutions that form public relationships to improve the quality of life for others: <https://dupageunited.org/>

Principles of Dialogue — written by Benedictine University's Interfaith Cooperation Committee (2019), based on Dr. Leonard Swidler's Dialogue Decalogue (1982):

- 1) DO engage in dialogue to listen and learn — not to argue.
- 2) DO practice dialogue both inside and outside your own community.
- 3) DO be completely honest — both with yourself and with others.
- 4) DON'T compare your ideals with the other's realities.
- 5) DO allow the other to define themselves.
- 6) DON'T go in with preconceptions about where disagreements lie.
- 7) DO view everyone as equal partners in the conversation.
- 8) DON'T tackle hot topics before building trust.
- 9) DO be self-critical of your own positions and community.
- 10) DO try to understand the other's experience, as much as possible.

As a body is one, though it has many parts, so also is Christ. (1 Cor 12:12)