

**B/12D**

## **Listening with the heart**

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**Dialogue is speaking and deep listening**

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## Introduction

If someone of a different religious tradition asks you 'What do you believe about life after death for human beings, how would we respond? Would we find ourselves repeating what we learnt from our catechism or what we heard the priest say? If we thought about it would we find that some of our beliefs are tied up with our culture or surroundings and have little to do with the teachings of the Catholic faith? So, what do we actually believe? Have we ever had a chance to express our faith in simple words that relate to life?

In this session we want to become more aware of the different layers of feeling and thinking that make up our beliefs and also become more aware of how well and deeply we listen when someone is speaking.

## A. Entering into interreligious dialogue

If we think honestly and carefully we will realise that our beliefs are not so simple since, as human beings we may belong to cultures that have their own customs and rituals pertaining to life and death; we may belong to a particular ethnic community that has rich and long standing traditions and meanings provided or we may have been converted as adults and we have not left behind some of the old religious beliefs or practices from our previous religion.

Most people have these 'layers' of belief, understanding and faith woven together in a dynamic fabric of everyday life. Many people are not very aware of how all the different influences in our lives play a part in our daily living and choices. Sometimes these 'layers' make understanding more challenging and can give way to misunderstanding. We need to ask questions to clarify the meaning of things that are said.

Take 20 minutes for the following activity:

1. *Sit in pairs or triads.*
2. *Choose one of the following topics.*
  - a. What I believe about prayer
  - b. What I believe about the resurrection from the dead
  - c. What I believe about pain and suffering
  - d. What I understand about 'being saved by Jesus'.
3. *Take some time to make notes or just to reflect quietly*
4. *Now share with your partner/s what you understand or believe and give some life experience if there are any related to this belief. You are encouraged to ask questions to clarify and understand.*
5. *Evaluate yourselves. How did you do? Did you find any time in your sharing when you were sharing your customs rather than your faith? Is there much room for improvement on how we express our faith?*

Let us practice the other topics on your own or with your communities in the coming weeks and do an evaluation each time.

## **B. Listening with the Heart**

One of the key skills in interreligious dialogue is the capacity to listen, to clarify and to listen with the heart as well as the head. For this reason also, we need to take many steps in our journey with people of various faiths. As we saw in part A, Interreligious dialogue has many forms and we can work with people of other faiths on common concerns; we can become friends by supporting them in difficult times or celebrating life with them at various stages. The Dialogue of Religious experience is not usually the first step in our dialogue even though we desire to build unity and peace and deeper appreciation between all peoples of faith.

Keeping this in mind, let us put our listening ability to the test and continue to practice to listen with love, humility and respect.

## **C. DIALOGUE needs GOOD LISTENING SKILLS**

*Let us practice our listening skills by doing the following exercise.*

1. *Choose ONE topic of common concern for the whole group.*

Some suggested topics:

- a) Passing on faith to children is more difficult today
  - b) Our faith should impact the way we work
  - c) The Sacrament of Penance is still relevant today
  - d) We can use social media for evangelization
  - e) What I love about the Mass
2. Think about it for three or four minutes. Think about what you want to say on your chosen topic.
  3. Form a circle with five or six people.
  4. First person begins to talk for one minute on the chosen topic.
  5. Second person has to repeat accurately what the first person said. All agree that the content is accurate before he/she can continue to talk on the topic themselves. The third person then repeats accurately what was said before beginning to talk themselves and it goes on...
  6. Complete the circle in this way.

#### **D. Conclusion**

- Consider for a moment. If you had to give yourself a score or grade from one to ten. Ten is the best listener. What would you give yourself? Do you think you can improve your listening skills?
- As part of our effort to listen more deeply to people, during the coming weeks try to listen more carefully than usual to people when they are speaking.
- Pause, face them and listen. These could be your family members, neighbours in the corridor or market place, colleagues at work.
- Let us pray for the humility and love to listen with our whole being and to desire unity and peace so that we are able to become people of dialogue.

*AsIPA Texts are developed by the AsIPA Resource Team.  
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