

Fostering a climate where communion takes place

We were conceived in the mind of God as the partner in a dialogue.

Hans Urs von Balthasar

Dialogue demands that I leave the place I dwell - the landscape of feelings and thoughts that seem important to me - in order to dwell with your thoughts, feelings, perceptions, fears, hopes. I must deny myself-forsake the familiar, give up my life - in order to experience your life.

*The purpose of dialogue is never to persuade another person to accept our opinions or values, or view of the world; rather it is **to create understanding- a climate where communion takes place.***

Elizabeth O'Connor

“Conversation” is linked etymologically to “conversion” - which means that in all genuine dialogue we move beyond where we are to a new place and a new attitude.

Dialogue is an embrace of the other in the middle of unanswered questions. “Open arms are...a sign of discontent with my own self- enclosed identity and a code of desire for the other”.

Miroslav Volf

Do you have to be right all the time? Can you tolerate ambiguity, not knowing?

Are you comfortable with questions? Or do you always need answers?

Do you have some bottom line, non-negotiable truths? What are they?

Do they allow you to enter into real dialogue?

How open are you? How closed?

And how do you cope with the person who is closed, dogmatic, opinionated?

Philip Carter is a retired Anglican Priest. He was the inaugural president of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD). He ran the Julian Centre in Adelaide, an independent and ecumenical centre for spirituality, from 1997-2009.

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Faith - not so much **believing** in a set of propositions - but openness, seeing and hearing what IS (and not what should be) - being open to surprise, newness and to grace.

In God's sight we do not fall: in our own sight we do not stand. I see both of these to be true. But God's sight is the higher truth.

The higher, 'God's sight', comforts us spiritually in him, and gives us true enjoyment; the other, more lowly, sight keeps us fearful and ashamed. But our good Lord wants us always to pay more attention to the higher, while not neglecting all knowledge of the lower, until the time we are brought to heaven, where our reward will be the Lord Jesus, and we shall be filled with joy and bliss for ever.

Julian of Norwich 8

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