

Dialogue as an exchange of gifts

The capacity for 'dialogue' is rooted in the nature of the person and human dignity....we cannot 'fully find ourselves except through a sincere gift of ourselves....Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some ways it is always an exchange of gifts'.

Ut Unum Sint, John Paul II

John Paul II, as early as 1969 (going beyond Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am') wrote: 'I am in the world, therefore I am related to all people and all things'. This was central to his understanding of solidarity – 'bearing one another's burdens'. Other people are not rivals he would say - they always enrich us by their very presence.

It is easy to think of close friends as gifts

but what about the stranger, or even the enemy?

Perhaps when we see the enemy outside us - and keep her there –

it is an invitation to locate the stranger or the enemy within –

the one we so often ignore or even despise.

What might happen if we give her some space and listen to her?

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