

DIALOGUE OF LIFE

(from an Asian Perspective)

[Delve Into
A Lot Of
Great Unity Efforts
Or Feel Lost
In Fearful End!]

Video clip: Find us Faithful

INTRODUCTION

Asia = inhabited by more than two-thirds of humanity

= home of many cultures and religions

= challenged by massive poverty and violence

Perspective = interrelation in which parts are mentally viewed

= person's way of organizing from within

him/herself the data of actuality from without and from within

= world interpretation

In one of the Asian countries, there is a program called "Living Room Dialogues."

A group of four Jewish couples and four Christian couples was invited to get to know each other as Christians and Jews.

They arranged to take turns meeting once a month at a Jewish couple's home, then a Christian's, alternating each month.

The beginning is
always the
toughest time.

Most groups
choose what for
them feels simple
and non-
threatening.

In this group, each person took a turn telling others about his or her own image of "the other," Jew or Christian, as he or she grew up.

The simple
genius of this
starter is that
there are no
"wrong" answers.

Limiting the sharing to lived experience gave the Jews or Christians the opportunity to "correct" the sometimes strange, perhaps even weird or "off the wall," images each had.

Everyone could
laugh at the
distorted pictures
one often holds of
each other.

The ice
was
broken.

What? – Definition of *Dialogue of Life*

The experience of the last thirty years gives evidence of the many ways in which *dialogue* is expressed.

First and foremost among the ways is the *dialogue of life* (the others, being the *dialogue of action*, *dialogue of experts* and *dialogue of religious experience*).

What does this
dialogue of life
mean and
entail?

The document *Dialogue and Mission* (1984)

states that this kind of dialogue is a *manner of acting, an attitude, a spirit which guides one's conduct.*

It implies
concern, respect,
and hospitality
toward the
other.

It leaves room for
the other person's
identity, modes of
expression, and
values.

Every follower of Christ, by reason of his/her human and Christian vocation, is called to live dialogue in his/her daily life, whether he/she finds him/herself in a majority situation or that of a minority.

He/she ought to bring the spirit of the Gospel into any environment in which he/she lives and works: familial, social, educational, artistic, economic, or political life.

Dialogue thus
finds its place in
the dynamism of
the Church's
mission.

Another spiritual writer summarizes the concept of the *dialogue of life* in the following:

a. It entails coexisting peacefully with “the other” in spite of obvious religious differences.

b. It is a direct challenge to religious people, non-religious individuals, towns, and communities to accept one another no matter their differences in beliefs or practices.

c. It entails faith communities and individuals “sharing with openness” what God is doing in the life of his people.

d. It is a means to challenge adherents of living faiths to rise up and in witness to each other about what they believe and also to help each other to gain their dignity without oppression.

e. Finally, in the words of the Asian bishops (FABC), it is “working together... for social justice, welfare, and human rights” as one of its concrete manifestations.

All around the world,
Christians are striving,
together with the
followers of other
religions, to build peace
and to establish just
societies.



Why? – Need of *Dialogue of Life*

Given the definition of *dialogue of life* above, it is clear that followers of different religious traditions are exposed to the practical daily living of their religious counterparts within the same community.

They experience one another as real people and learn more about their neighbors.

Above all, through *dialogue of life*, religious people reflect on how they can be communities and witnesses of service to themselves, to one another, and to the wider community without compromising their commitments to God.

In this pluralistic environment, religious practitioners find themselves confronted by three main challenges of *intellectual, moral, and theological* character that create the need for dialogue of life.

Firstly, at the
intellectual level,
religious pluralism
poses a great challenge
to the human mind.

There are always new things to learn from other religious paradigms, and they can be learned through constructive daily interactions and open-minded relationships with the other.

Secondly,
there is a
moral
challenge.

Perhaps more than any other time in history, the world has a strong desire for peace and cohesion.

At the international level, the United Nations and its agencies are working hard towards the realization of such socioeconomic and political conditions as would make the world a happier and more equitable place.

Regional and sub-
regional economic
and political
groupings serve
the same purpose.

Given this yearning for peace and attempts to dismantle all unwanted barriers, there is the need to ensure that religious pluralism does not prevent the development of loyalties across frontiers.

Religion should
instead facilitate
such loyalties
through *dialogue*
of life.

People of faith living harmoniously together without holding back their common human struggles can lead to openness, which can break down mental and social barriers.

Thirdly, there is
the *theological*
challenge.

Although *dialogue of life* does not entirely eliminate exclusivist religious tendencies, it reduces them through long-term interaction and engagements of the religious people in dealing with life's daily challenges.

There are many religious, social, political and economic challenges that confront humanity today that call for the collaborative efforts of every person and group, which must be confronted collectively.

How? – Challenges of *Dialogue of Life in Asia*

From an *Asian perspective*,
they include interreligious
efforts to support workers'
rights in *Korea*;

to provide
shelters for
battered women
in *Thailand*;

to bring about
reconciliation after the
conflicts in Gujarat in
India and in the
Moluccas and Poso in
Indonesia;

to provide a
compassionate response
to the plight of refugees
in ***Australia***; to assist
Bangladeshi workers
detained in ***Malaysia***;

to defend the civil status
of Hill Tribe peoples in
Thailand; to defend
squatters threatened
with summary expulsion
in the *Philippines*;

to publicize the cases of
Christians accused of
blasphemy in *Pakistan*; to
protest the torture of
detainees in police
stations in *Nepal* and *Sri
Lanka*;

to oppose the practice of indentured workers in *India*; to educate the public in *Malaysia* about the casual discrimination faced by those who suffer from HIV-AIDS.

All these and many
more demand a
dialogue of life
among different
faiths.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to use the acronym of D-I-A-L-O-G-U-E O-F L-I-F-E – as an invitation to each of us - which is: *Delve Into A Lot Of Great Unity Efforts Or Feel Lost In Fearful End.*

There are five parts of this acronym.

Delve Into... (Involvement)

A Lot Of... (Quantity)

Great Unity Efforts... (Quality)

Or Feel Lost... (Consequence)

In Fearful End. (Finality)

