

A Catholic Guide to Interreligious Dialogue



What is interreligious dialogue?

“In an address to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1990, Pope John Paul II described dialogue as: *‘not so much an idea to be studied as a way of living in positive relationship with others’* (CBCEW, *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger*, §2, 2010).

“There exists different forms of interreligious dialogue:

- **The Dialogue of Life**, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit with one another;
- **The Dialogue of Action**, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people;
- **The Dialogue of Theological Exchange**, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages;
- **The Dialogue of Religious Experience**, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches”.

(Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Dialogue & Proclamation, §42, 1991).

Why dialogue?

“Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities. This dialogue, in the first place, is a conversation about human existence or simply, as the bishops of India have put it, a matter of “being open to them, sharing their joys and sorrows” (*Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, §250, 2013*).

“The Catholic Church’s promotion of dialogue, and its respect for the freedom of all to practice their religion, does not stem from the belief that truth is relative. Quite the contrary, it stems from the conviction that truth is one and universal, that there are glimpses of that one truth and supreme good in other religions, and that is the one God who, in his loving Providence, is the Creator of those elements of truth and goodness” (*CBCCEW, Meeting God in Friend and Stranger, §27, 2010*).

What does the Church ask of me?

“Each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue, although not always to the same degree or in the same way. The contribution of the laity is indispensable in this area” (*John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, §57, 1990*).

“We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God” (*Paul VI, Nostra Aetate, §5, 1965*).