



**THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS:
DIALOGUE & LISTENING**

Plenary Council 2020
Facilitators Workshop
Archdiocese of Adelaide

LAST TIME ... SYNODALITY

Synodality, as a constitutive element of the Church, offers us the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself. If we understand, as Saint John Chrysostom says, that "Church and Synod are synonymous", inasmuch as the Church is nothing other than the "journeying together" of God's flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord ...



SYNODALITY

... then we understand too that, within the Church, no one can be "raised up" higher than others. On the contrary, in the Church, it is necessary that each person "lower" himself or herself, so as to serve our brothers and sisters along the way.



Pope Francis, 50th Anniversary,
Synod of Bishops, October 2015

DIALOGUE: THE CHURCH'S TASK

"The council, in witnessing and giving expression to the faith of the whole of God's people brought together by Christ, cannot give more striking evidence of this people's feelings of oneness, concern and love towards the whole human family, of which it is a part, than by entering into conversation with it on these various problems, contributing enlightenment derived from the gospel and supplying the human race with the saving resources which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church receives from its founder." (no. 3)



DIALOGUE: THE CHURCH'S TASK

"It is for God's people as a whole, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and especially for pastors and theologians, to listen to the various voices of our day, discerning them and interpreting them ... so that the revealed truth can be increasingly appropriated, better understood and more suitably expressed."

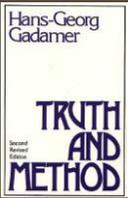


Gaudium et spes, no. 44



THE PRACTICE OF DIALOGUE

HANS-GEORG GADAMER




1900 – 2002
(Heidelberg)

Philosopher

"All products of a tradition stand within that tradition"

CHARLES TAYLOR

b. 1931 (Montreal)

Hegel | Sources of the Self | A Secular Age
The Language Animal



"Understanding the Other:
A Gadamerian View
of Conceptual Schemes"

THE PRACTICE OF DIALOGUE

Dialogue or conversation plays a fundamental role in human existence. It's not merely an activity through which we share perspectives and negotiate common arrangements.

The best contemporary philosophy offers a far richer and deeper account of dialogue. It sees human existence as fundamentally dialogical.

Dialogue is the dynamism through which people discover and form their identities.

Human existence is, in itself, "a kind of enacted dialogue" (Stephen Mulhall).

KEY FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

- 1 True dialogue requires a *profound openness* to and engagement with the perspective of another (individual, group, or culture).
 - Attempting to understand the world on their terms.
 - So...listening to their words, their particular emphasis, discerning "the way they put the world together"
 - If only my voice can be heard, I'm talking to myself.
 - This means that those who proclaim the gospel must be ready to bring out the *real strength of the other's stance* – be ready to be moved by what moves the other.

KEY FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

- 1 True dialogue requires a *profound openness* to and engagement with the perspective of another.
 - This feature has a *theological meaning*:
JP II: the Holy Spirit is offered to all,
"not only individuals but also society and history,
peoples, cultures and religions"

KEY FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

- 2 As we work at openness, we realize that we had both understood and misunderstood the other. We had a lucid view of some elements, but totally misunderstood others.
 - Dialogue, therefore, leads me to *reflect on and refine my own expectations and assumptions*. It leads me to retrace my steps, and reconsider my own take on the world.
 - If I don't have anything to say, there is no dialogue. Dialogue leads to a *renewed understanding of Christian faith in a new context*.
 - "No understanding the other without a changed understanding of self" Charles Taylor

KEY FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

Summary:

Christians dialogue with people of other faiths to understand what animates them, what runs most deeply and powerfully through their lives. Christians then ponder what they have learned about the other in the light of their own encounter with Jesus Christ.

KEY FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

③ The process of dialogue—of growing in appreciation of the other— not only changes individuals' perspectives, it brings dialogue partners into a new unity.

- "In a successful conversation they both [the dialogue partners] come under the influence of the truth of the object and thus are bound to one another in a new community. To reach an understanding in dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were."

Godamer, "Truth & Method," 379

KEY FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

And...rather than perceiving the emerging communion as the "results" of dialogue, we would better understand that the dialogue *itself* transforms conversation partners into a communion.

The communion cannot be detached from the path through which it was reached. That is: a central aspect of the communion we now have is the kind of dialogue that does, or can, take place within it.