

7.8 Forms of Inter-Religious Dialogue

Aim

To help the students become aware of the different types of inter-religious dialogue

Materials Required

Pen and Paper

Procedure

Divide participants in two groups.

Group A: Let the group recall their experiences of African traditional religion in terms of either personal visits to shrines, witnessing a traditional prayer or any suitable experience. Let them share these with the group.

Group B: Let the group recall their experiences with Islam: visit to the mosque, conversation with a Muslim, any Muslim festival or activity witnessed or any suitable Islamic experience. Let them share these with the group.

Input

Inter-religious dialogue refers to learned members from different religions discussing religious issues. At another level, it might refer to discussion between members of different religions which might enrich them and lead to better relations between them.

According to the 1984 document of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, 'The Attitude of the Church Towards Followers of Other Religions' Dialogue is not only a discussion, but also includes all positive and constructive inter-religious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment.

This document goes further to give four forms of dialogue. They are:

- Dialogue of Life:** the starting point is dialogue as a manner of acting, an attitude and a spirit that guides a person's conduct. This conduct affects the person's behaviour with others, be it a simple presence and witness, service, or direct proclamation. The scope of dialogue is where the person lives and works: family, social, educational, political or economic life. Here the whole of life- joys and sorrows, problems and preoccupations - become a dialogue.
- Dialogue of Action/Works:** Dialogue here takes the form of collaboration with others in works that are humanitarian, social, economic or political in view of human liberation and advancement.
- Dialogue of Theological Exchange:** a dialogue of religious experts in a bid to enrich, deepen and clarify their various religious legacies and also to appreciate the spiritual values of each other. For this to happen, the experts should be conversant with their own religion and it best happens in a pluralistic society where there is tolerance of and contact between different religions.
- Dialogue of Religious Experience:** this is the context where people, well versed in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches – prayer, contemplation, faith and expressions of the search for the Absolute – with people of other religions. If well done, this dialogue can result in mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation for promoting and preserving the highest values and spiritual ideals.

Review

- Inter-religious dialogue refers to learned members from different religions discussing religious issues. At another level, it might refer to discussion between members of different religions which might enrich them and lead to better relations between them.
- According to the 1984 document of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, there are four forms of dialogue:



- Dialogue of Life
- Dialogue of Action/Works
- Dialogue of Theological Exchange
- Dialogue of Religious Experience

Reflection

Dialogue is not just a discussion, it must touch attitude and spirit of relationship.

Relevant Skills

From your personal experience, narrate the positive aspects of inter-religious dialogue.

Resources

The Attitude of the Church Toward Followers of Other Religions May 10, 1984 Secretariat for Non-Christians.