



# The periodical of the Professional Society of Religious Educators

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## EDITORIAL

Given the recent incidents of xenophobia in our country and the ever-growing distrust arising out of the abuse of religion for political ends in parts of Africa and Asia, it seems imperative to pay more attention to the urgent need for dialogue across the dividing lines of culture and religion.

This second issue of *Roots & Wings* will therefore pay some attention to these issues. A recent statement from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, focused on the question of dialogue with Muslims, confirms the urgency of the matter, and a short article by Ron Rolheiser OMI, a well-known spiritual writer sets out principles to guide such dialogue. We also include a statement from the Department of Ecumenism and Inter-faith Dialogue on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which takes place between 14 and 24 May.

The website, *RE-Online*, carries a feature 'Email a Believer' that enables person-to-person dialogue, and the book reviewed, *My Neighbor's Faith*, contains a wealth of moving stories of interreligious encounter, growth and transformation. The story "How does

peace grow?" illustrates the positive consequences that reaching out to others can have.

For classroom practice we reprint - with permission - an article by Richard Hayes that can help us in the often challenging field of Theological Education. He poses six rules for talking about God. We also feature a reconciliation paraliturgy which can be used in schools.

To get us thinking about our practice, Graham Rossiter and Marisa Crawford share some thoughts about the qualities of sound religious education in the secondary school.

In the news section you can read about a nun, not unknown to those who attended the Religious Education Conference in Durban in September 2013, who presented an award at Hollywood, and how Christian meditation has begun to catch on in Fiji schools.

Other local news will keep you in touch with developments here in South Africa.

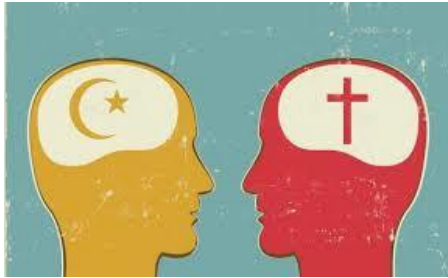
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## REFLECTION

### Statement from the Interreligious Dialogue Council on Dialogue with Muslims

(Vatican City, April 22, 2015 [Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org))



“The events of recent times cause many of us to ask: 'Is there still space for dialogue with Muslims?'. The answer is: yes, more than ever. Firstly because the great majority of Muslims themselves do not identify with the current acts of barbarism.

Unfortunately today the word 'religious' is often associated with the word 'violence', whereas believers must demonstrate that religions are required to be

heralds of peace and not violence.

To kill in the name of religion is not only an offence to God, but it is also a defeat for humanity. On 9 January 2006 Pope Benedict XVI, addressing the Diplomatic Corps and speaking about the danger of clashes between civilisations and in particular organised terrorism, affirmed that 'No situation can justify such criminal activity, which covers the perpetrators with infamy, and it is all the more deplorable when it hides behind religion, thereby bringing the pure truth of God down to the level of the terrorists' own blindness and moral perversion'.

Unfortunately in recent days we have witnessed a radicalisation of community and religious discourse, with the consequent risks of increasing hatred, violence, terrorism and the growing and commonplace stigmatisation of Muslims and their religion.

In such a context we are called upon to strengthen fraternity and dialogue. Believers have formidable potential for peace, if we believe that man was created by God and that humanity is a single family; and even more so if we believe, as we Christians do, that God is Love. Continuing to engage in dialogue, even when experiencing persecution, can become a sign of hope. Believers do not wish to impose their vision of humanity and of history, but rather seek to propose respect for differences, freedom of thought and religion, the protection of human dignity, and love for truth.

We must have the courage to review the quality of family life, the methods of teaching religion and history, and the content of sermons in our places of worship. Above all, family and schools are the key to ensuring that tomorrow's world will be based on mutual respect and brotherhood.

Uniting our voice to that of Pope Francis, we say: 'any violence which seeks religious justification warrants the strongest condemnation because the Omnipotent is the God of life and peace. The world expects those who claim to adore God to be men and women of peace who are capable of living as brothers and sisters, regardless of ethnic, religious, cultural or ideological differences' (Ankara, 28 November 2014)".

<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/44684>

# REFLECTION

## Principles for Interfaith Dialogue and Interfaith Attitudes

(Ron Rolheiser, 13 April 2015)

We live inside a world and inside religions that are too given to disrespect and violence. Virtually every newscast today documents the prevalence of disrespect and violence done in the name of religion, disrespect done for the sake of God (strange as that expression may seem). Invariably those acting in this way see their actions as sacral, justified by sacred cause.

And, if history is to be believed, it has always been so. No religion, Christianity no less than any other, has been innocent. Every one of the great religions of the world has been, at various times, both persecuted and persecutor. So this begs the question: What are some fundamental principles we are asked to live out apposite our relationship to other faiths, irrespective our particular faith?

What's best in each of our traditions would suggest these ten principles:

1. All that is good, true, and beautiful comes from one and the same author, God. Nothing that is true, irrespective of its particular religious or secular cloak, may be seen as opposed to true faith and religion.
2. God wills the salvation of all people, equally, without discrimination. God has no favorites. All people have access to God and to God's Spirit, and the whole of humankind has never lacked for divine providence. Moreover each religion is to reject nothing that is true and holy in other religions.
3. No one religion or denomination has the full and whole truth. God is both infinite and ineffable. For this reason, by definition, God cannot be captured adequately in human concepts and human language. Thus, while our knowledge of God may be true, it is always only partial. God can be truly known, but God cannot be adequately thought.
4. All faiths and all religions are journeying towards the fullness of truth. No one religion or denomination may consider its truth complete, something to permanently rest within; rather it must see it as a starting point from which to journey. Moreover, as various religions (and denominations and sectarian groups within those religions) we need to feel secure enough within our own "home" so as to acknowledge the truth and beauty that is expressed in other "homes". We need to accept (and, I suggest, be pleased) that there are other lives within which the faith is written in a different language.
5. Diversity within religions is a richness, willed by God. God does not just wish our unity; God also blesses our diversity which helps reveal the stunning overabundance within God. Religious diversity is the cause of much tension, but that diversity and the struggle to overcome it will contribute strongly to the richness of our eventual unity.

6. God is “scattered” in world religions. Anything that is positive within a religion expresses something of God and contributes to divine revelation. Hence, seen from this aspect, the various religions of the world all help to make God known.
7. Each person must account for his or her faith on the basis of his or her own conscience. Each of us must take responsibility for our own faith and salvation.
8. Intentionally all the great world religions interpenetrate each other (and, for a Christian, that means that they interpenetrate the mystery of Christ). A genuine faith knows that God is solicitous for everyone and that God’s spirit blows freely and therefore it strives to relate itself to the intentionality of other religions and to other denominations and sectarian groups within its own religion.
9. A simple external, historical connection to any religion is less important than achieving a personal relationship, ideally of intimacy, with God. What God wants most deeply from us, irrespective of our religion, is not a religious practice but a personal relationship that transforms our lives so as to radiate God’s goodness, truth, and beauty more clearly.
10. Within our lives and within our relationship to other religions, respect, graciousness, and charity must trump all other considerations. This does not mean that all religions are equal and that faith can be reduced to its lowest common denominator, but it does mean that what lies deepest inside of every sincere faith are these fundamentals: respect, graciousness, and charity.

Throughout history, great thinkers have grappled with the problem of the one and the many. And, consciously or unconsciously, all of us also struggle with that tension between the one and the many, the relationship between unity and diversity; but perhaps this not so much a problem as it is a richness that reflects the over-abundance of God and our human struggle to grasp that over-abundance. Perhaps the issue of religious diversity might be described in this way:

- Different peoples, one earth
- Different beliefs, one God
- Different languages, one heart
- Different failings, one law of gravity
- Different energies, one Spirit
- Different scriptures, one Word
- Different forms of worship, one desire
- Different histories, one destiny
- Different disciplines, one aim
- Different approaches, one road
- Different faiths - one Mother, one Father, one earth, one sky, one beginning, one end.



<http://ronrolheiser.com/principles-for-interfaith-dialogue-and-interfaith-attitudes/#.VUDcyCGqqk>

## REFLECTION

### Statement of the Department of Ecumenism and Inter-faith Dialogue: On the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.



This year in the Southern Hemisphere the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity takes place between Ascension Thursday (May 14) and Pentecost Sunday (24 May). The theme jointly prepared by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches is based on the episode of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4:1-42) with specific emphasis on the phrase: *Jesus said to her: "Give me to drink".* (Jn 4:7)

In the encounter Jesus opens up a space for dialogue by first asking the woman to share her riches with him. In other words, even though he is God he puts himself in the position of someone who is not complete without receiving what the other has to give. In his commentary on this episode St Augustine points out the “weakness” of Jesus. He comes to the well weary from the journey he has undertaken, taking on our weakness so that he might give us his strength. In the same commentary he says that “Jesus thirsts for the faith of the woman.”

In a normal debate the participants usually follow a two-step process: first, demonstrate how right I am; second, demonstrate how wrong my opponent is. My opponent has everything to learn from me; I have nothing to learn from my opponent. The debate goes ahead but dialogue never even gets off the ground. Here is what Pope Francis says about what is required for dialogue to take place:

*“Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from a conviction that the other person has something good to say. It assumes that there is room in the heart for the person’s point of view, opinion, and proposal. To dialogue entails a cordial reception, not a prior condemnation. In order to dialogue, it is necessary to know how to lower the defences, open the doors of the house, and offer human warmth.”* (On Heaven and Earth, Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2011)

Dialogue is not some form of diplomatic negotiation or the sort of bargaining that goes on between union leaders and employers. In these cases the parties are willing to compromise but only as a last resort in getting what they want. And for the sake of saving face each party claims the outcome as a victory. Instead dialogue is another word for love of the truth, a love so intense that one is willing to put aside any claim to “possess” the truth. For if Jesus is the truth then it’s I who am possessed by the truth. Or rather it is we who are taken up together by this truth which is realised on earth in the unity of his Mystical Body. As long as this Body lacks full unity then we are all still on the journey towards the full truth. The lack of unity means that we all need each other. If I go to the altar without my brother or sister the Father will send me away telling me to come back only when we have been reconciled with one another.

One of the most important initiatives which has taken place in recent years in the field of ecumenical dialogue has its focus in what has been termed “Receptive Ecumenism”. It started in Durham, England mainly through the work of a Roman Catholic lay theologian at

the University of Durham, Dr Paul Murray. Various international conferences have taken place bringing together some of the most significant people in the ecumenical movement from across various church traditions and from significant ecumenical bodies such as the WCC's Faith and Order Commission. The Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University gives this definition of Receptive Ecumenism:

*“The essential principle behind Receptive Ecumenism is that the primary ecumenical responsibility is to ask not “What do the other traditions first need to learn from us?” but “What do we need to learn from them?” The assumption is that if all were asking this question seriously and acting upon it then all would be moving in ways that would both deepen our authentic respective identities and draw us into more intimate relationship.”*

It has also identified eight key elements of dialogue based on receptive ecumenism:

- To recognize that in becoming all that we are called to be, we must own the responsibility that we can only change ourselves rather than others, that we are being resourced for this, and that this task takes time.
- To learn from and across our denominational differences in a mutually enriching way that fosters growth within traditions by finding the beauty of another tradition's focus.
- To summon churches to return to their core callings in fresh ways that appropriately cohere with the form and patterns of received tradition.
- To engage a future-oriented understanding of the Christian tradition as a dynamic web that is open to growth and change.
- To emphasize that the ecclesial dimension of conversion includes the ongoing development of the organizational, structural, cultural, and practical aspects of the church.
- To embrace the unilateral willingness of ecclesial conversion for the sake of the ongoing flourishing of one's own tradition in love.
- The church is always in the service of the truth of Christ's Kingdom, which must be lived out with attentive hospitality of the life and flourishing of other traditions.
- To call churches to grow visibly together in structural and sacramental unity with the Triune God.

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/projects/receptiveecumenism/about/>

We began by looking at Jesus entering into dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well. So too in our question for the unity of Christ's Mystical Body we must look to Jesus. He is the one who through his sacrifice on the cross united all of us with God and with one another. When we look at him, forsaken it would seem by heaven and earth we behold a model of that extreme emptying of self that is required of all of us if true dialogue is to take place. In a public lecture delivered in March 2014 Dr Kobus Gerber the General Secretary of the NG Kerk said:

*“Ultimately it is at the foot of the cross looking at Jesus Forsaken that we will recognize that our divisions, sisters and brothers, are all relative to what He did for us and His life which He gave, for us to be One.”*

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## WEBSITE

### RE: ONLINE

<http://www.reonline.org.uk/>



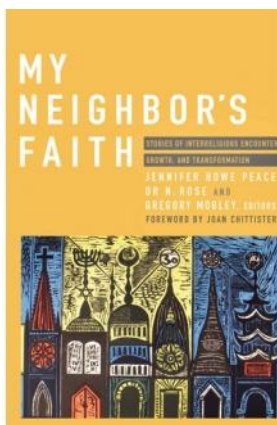
This website contains many ideas and resources for LEADING, LEARNING, KNOWING, ASSESSING and SUPPORTING Religious Education.

There is an unusual feature on the SUPPORTING dropdown list. Click 'Email a believer'. This will take you to a page where you can ask questions of members of various religions and worldviews (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Humanism, Islam, Judaism, Paganism and Sikhism) through email. In each case you are introduced to the person who will answer your query.

## BOOK REVIEW

### My Neighbor's Faith

(Jennifer Howe Peace, Rabbi Or Rose & Gregory Mobley (editors) )



We live in the most religiously diverse society in the history of humankind. Every day, people of different religious beliefs and practices encounter one another in a myriad of settings. How has this new situation of religious diversity impacted the way we understand the religious "other," ourselves, and God? Can we learn to live together with mutual respect, working together for the creation of a more compassionate and just world?

This ground-breaking volume gathers an array of inspiring and penetrating stories about the interreligious encounters of outstanding community leaders, scholars, public intellectuals, and activist from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. With wisdom, wit, courage, and humility, these writers from a range of religious backgrounds share their personal experience of border-crossing, and the lessons learned from their interreligious adventures.

<http://www.amazon.com/My-Neighbors-Faith-Interreligious-Encounter/dp/1570759588>  
<http://www.orbisbooks.com/my-neighbors-faith.html>

# ARTICLE

## Some of the qualities of sound religious education in the secondary school

(Marisa Crawford & Graham Rossiter)

This chapter has raised issues about the role of religious education in Catholic schools. Some suggestions have been made about the way religion should be taught. The remainder of part one of the book will be concerned with a more detailed examination of these issues and with developing a theory to guide the teaching of religion.

To be clear in their own minds about what they are trying to achieve when teaching religion, teachers need to have positive and unambiguous aims in relation to each of the following questions:

1. What does the classroom teaching of religion actually do for pupils? What types of responses from pupils should be sought by the teacher?
2. How does the teaching of religion relate to the development of religious faith in young people?
3. How does the teaching of religion relate to pupils' knowledge and understanding and to their emotional/affective development?
4. How should intellectual study, evaluative activities and discussions be managed in religious education?
5. What place should the teacher's own personal beliefs and commitments have in the teaching of religion?

One of the things young people want in religious education is the opportunity to explore religious issues with freedom. They want to examine and study religious issues objectively and to be able to put them into historical and philosophical perspective. They admit that they want knowledge of religion and they want to acquire skills for studying religious material openly and critically.

Young people are particularly sensitive about their freedom in personal and religious matters. They object strongly to teachers who in any way try to tell them *what* they *ought* to believe, *how* they *ought* to think, *what moral standards* they *ought* to have, and *how* they *ought* to behave. The negative reactions of young people, when they sense their freedom is being imposed on, appears to be more intense now than it was with young people in the past. Perhaps it is because today's youth are more strongly imbued with a sense of freedom, individuality and autonomy, which is celebrated and valued in their culture, particularly in the entertainment and advertising sections of the media. The vehemence of young people's reactions to the perceived 'imposition' of religion is shown in the clichés: "We resent having religion rammed down our throats" or "We hate Bible-bashing".

Young people do not necessarily object to religion classes as such but rather to the way they are often taught and organised. They are open to the possibility of 'studying' religion but closed to classes which are perceived as the 'getting' or the 'imposing' of religion. A stress on information and an emphasis on different points of view give them evidence that the teacher is endeavouring to be impartial and is not concerned with 'injecting' a particular point of view, or with getting them to assent to or stand by a particular



commitment, or with requiring them to reveal their own personal views. Where the focus is on information and alternative points of view, young people are then more free to discuss their own ideas.

An initial focus on information and content also provides the best way for pupils to move into an exploration of the emotional and personal implications of a topic. For example, when studying a gospel in detail, pupils could 'try on' the feelings, emotions and thoughts of the particular group of early Christians for whom that gospel was written. With some awareness of the intended message of the gospel writer for his immediate readers, the pupils can then ask themselves "What is the particular message that I find in that gospel? Like classic prose or poetry, how does it transcend its own time and culture and speak across two thousand years to *me* here and now?" Similarly, when covering emotionally charged contemporary issues like abortion, capital punishment and nuclear war, an *indirect* way of looking at the emotions that arise during an informative study of the topic is more appropriate and yields more fruitful discussion than a more *direct* attempt to focus on and draw out pupils' emotions.

Young people can feel afraid of making decisions about their own lifestyle and commitments. They can feel that they do not have enough knowledge or experience to make useful decisions. They can feel powerless while having an impression that adults (for example, teachers) have life all sorted out with clear cut beliefs and values and a purposeful philosophy of life. Religion teachers can help young people see that they do have power over decision-making in their own lives. They can learn how to acquire knowledge of issues which will enable them to make and stand by decisions with a measure of self-confidence in their own autonomy.

Religious education should help young people learn how to explore questions of ultimate significance for their lives. They can learn how to research and inquire, and how to get the resources needed to give them more knowledge and power in relation to their own futures. Also, learning how to think critically and to evaluate when studying religion, adds to their sense of personal autonomy and power over their own destinies. A critical, inquiring, open-ended study helps them learn that they need not be overwhelmed by life or religious problems. These can be investigated and informed decisions can be made about them.

There is a need for teachers to be realistic about the 'religion readiness' of young people. Teachers should ask themselves how many 13-18 year olds have had sufficient life experience to prompt them to ask many serious questions about their purpose in life, their long term values and commitments. There may not be a pressing need for them to resolve those questions completely at this stage. Perhaps it is the adults who are pressing for too much reflection on purpose and meaning in life. There is a danger that religion teachers may be too concerned about communicating 'answers' to questions that young people have not yet begun to ask. Secondary pupils may not be ready for an extensive, deep religious search -- they may be more concerned about their own physical appearance, personal relationships and job prospects. What religious education at school should do is give young people a good foundation so that when they come to ask these questions they will have a certain amount of knowledge and a skill in being able to search for relevant information and to think carefully about it before making decisions. While senior students may begin a process of sorting out their own philosophy of life and clarifying their beliefs, values and commitments, this process should be expected to continue for many years beyond their secondary schooling.

(From *Teaching Religion in the Secondary School*. 1985, Chapter1)

# ARTICLE

## Six Rules for Talking about God

(Richard Hayes)

The way we talk about God usually depends on our age, our education, the religious tradition we stand in, and our accumulated life experience. And the way teachers speak about God usually depends on who they are speaking with: among themselves, with young students, addressing adult seekers. This should make one wary about speaking of rules that govern this enterprise; many variations make the process exceedingly complex. Yet every fresh conversation usually takes a long time to get on track because some fundamental premises that serve as a kind of grammar for communication cannot be presupposed. Each speaker may take some version of these principles for granted, but he or she will have to gradually learn whether the others are on the same page. For example, at the end of a long interchange two people may discover that, in using the term "God," they were not speaking about the same reality at all, because they share different assumptions about what it means to know and speak of God.

This essay proposes a diagnostic, a set of six principles that might serve as ground rules for speaking about God from within the Christian tradition. They are stated very simply so that they may serve as the basis for further conversation. Everyone will not agree with all of them as stated. But this makes them useful as topics that might be entertained in an extended discussion. They should be accessible to people of all ages and professional backgrounds because of their fundamental nature. I express each of them first in a negative way and then give a positive explanation. The negative form is meant to be sharp and seemingly uncompromising. The positive development that anyone might give

them would smooth the edges by offering more nuance to something that is rather subtle. Here they are.

### **1. Faith is not belief.**

Beliefs are statements about reality that can be laid out in propositional forms. And belief, in the sense of believing, consists of assenting to these views, holding them, and allowing them to order one's life in the way they indicate. Such believing transpires in our reflective consciousness; the more one discusses beliefs, the more they begin to take definite propositional form. They can be compared and contrasted with other beliefs because of their conceptual clarity.

Theology today frequently sees faith as something much deeper and more comprehensive than belief. It might be called a person's basic commitment that lies embedded in all his or her actions. It may not be so clearly enunciated because of its depth. Usually beliefs try to put this comprehensive orientation of a community into words. Beliefs and faith, then, are intimately related. But faith's all encompassing character can never be exhausted by statements about it or its object. Understood in this way, faith seems like a common phenomenon; all people live by some faith. Faith needs beliefs, but they are not exactly the same thing.

### **2. Doubt is not lack of faith.**

Doubt is more appropriately directed at beliefs than at faith. People of faith usually map their faith with a lot of views about a lot of things, either from one's Christian church or another religion. It would be extraordinary if all the beliefs that one entertained never shifted, either publicly, as times change, or

privately, as each person evolves through new experiences. But when a particular belief is called into question, one's faith can remain constant, altered a bit depending on the belief, but substantially the same.

This obvious distinction actually clears a lot of unnecessary baggage out of the way. Refining one's belief structure always entails calling some belief or other into question, doubting it in the way it was presented, and reformulating it in relation to other convictions, or dropping it as something that appears to be an obstacle to the authenticity of the deeper faith commitment. When people confuse faith with beliefs, development and change can become agonizing. Recognizing the difference makes doubts part of a living faith.

### **3. *God is not something or someone.***

If God is God, creator and sustainer of whatever exists, then God cannot be a specific part of that which is created. When mystical theologians speak of God as not *a* being among others, or not *a* thing among the many things that make up our universe, they are trying to express the recognition that God is truly transcendent: God is beyond all that exists. God is no-thing, not a big person in the sky but the power and energy of being itself.

One should always be suspicious when people deny the existence of God. They usually have a conception of God, a formulated belief about God that can no longer make sense and thus can be denied. Frequently people of faith note that if God were the kind of being that unbelievers reject, they too would reject God.

### **4. *God is not absent.***

The transcendence of God, God's inability to be reduced to what we can name or point to, frequently gets translated into God's absence. This seems to be ratified when people experience or witness human suffering as indications that God does not show up. How could a

simultaneously good and all powerful God have created or tolerated such evil? In other words, God is depicted as so transcendent as to be irrelevant and thus a non-existent projection.

But the transcendence of God cannot be measured in finite terms of distance or absence. God's transcendence means that God cannot be located in the sphere of concrete things, because God is the very power within reality that holds it in being. Metaphors drawn from this world cannot reach this transcendence that is the "within" of all things and thus an actual presence. Theology says that God creates out of nothing. This means that nothing lies between whatever exists and God's creating presence. But we still try to talk about God with such phrases as "the ground of being" and the "pure energy of love" that sustains reality.

### **5. *God cannot be known apart from signs.***

Frequently conversations about God unfold as if the participants had direct knowledge of the one they are calling God. But God's transcendence means that God is not directly available to measure the accuracy of our language by comparison. We really know God through various markers in our life's experience that signal God's presence. Some things may point to the God as an awesome, stable transcendence, like the sacred mountain where Moses received God's commandments; other things may appear to be the effects of God's immanent presence, like marvelous inspired leaders and prophets who call forth the idea of the power of God as Holy Spirit at work in them.

Because God can only be available to our consciousness via an imagination that accompanies all knowledge, and because there are so many concrete contextual experiences that direct human seeking towards God, it is no wonder that the conceptions of God are many. But this situation which may seem so confusing from one perspective, may be quite

salutary from another. Because God exceeds all human thought through fullness of being, it is a good thing that so many seeming revelations open up new dimensions of God's reality

**6. God does not compete with authentic human value.**

As human beings became more powerful and technologically adept, God seemed to recede from the world, and reliance on God seemed to sap human energy by offering a salvation in a world other than this one. A classic form of atheism raises up the idea of humanity in God's stead. But it makes little sense to imagine God as a rival of the very human freedom that God creates and supports. It makes more sense on strictly logical grounds to imagine God as the guarantor of all the

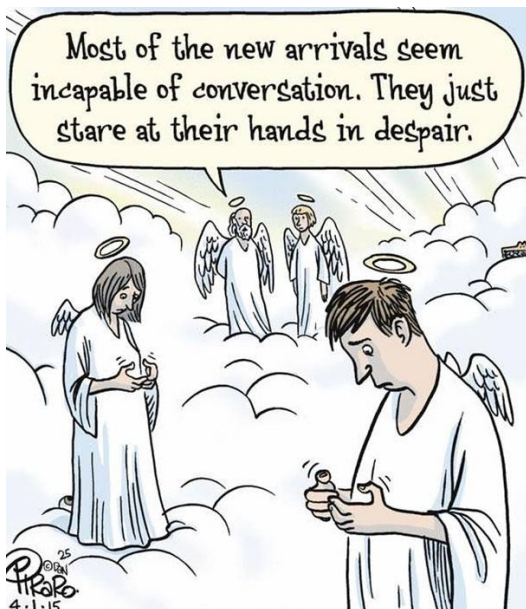
human values that human intelligence can conceive and that human creativity can work to achieve. In the evolutionary world we exist in, everything is subject to the laws of time, entropy, and death. In this scenario, God as the author of existence also appears as its finisher and thus a ground of hope that the whole process makes some sense.

These rules should be subjected to more discussion about their implications and their limits. They are designed from a Christian perspective, and it would be interesting to think about what people of other faiths think about them. Perhaps more should be added, or they should be rendered clearer by more description. The hope is that such conversations would be constructive.

\*Richard Hayes is a pen name for a writer who frequently writes on religious and theological matters.

## HUMOUR

See more on page 16



# STORY

## How does peace grow?

*A story from Heartsong Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee*

'Nine-eleven', or 11 September, is a big date in the USA, since 13 years ago when two hijacked planes were flown into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. Tragic destruction and a huge loss of life followed. Feelings against Muslims sometimes run high, even though the suicide bombers did something deeply un-Islamic by killing themselves and so many innocent people. In the USA, there is some pretty strong anti-Muslim feeling connected to the events of that day in 2001. For example, in the state of Tennessee, a law was passed recently forbidding Islamic Sharia Law. Less than 1 per cent of the people of Tennessee are Muslims, but there is some religious intolerance in the USA.

Steve Stone is pastor of Heartsong Church in Memphis, Tennessee. He learned that the Memphis Islamic Center had bought some land adjacent to his church, and were planning a community centre and mosque. Rather than protest the plans, he put up a large sign outside his church that said: 'Heartsong Church Welcomes Memphis Islamic Center to the Neighbourhood'. The Muslim leaders were rather amazed by this. They came to talk to Steve. 'We hoped we would just be ignored! We didn't imagine we would be welcome.' Steve said 'We are just trying to love our neighbours, as Jesus instructs us to do.'

When Ramadan time came round, the Muslim community's new building was still under construction. They asked Steve if they could use a small room at his church. He gave them the biggest room he had. The friendship between the Christians and the Muslims grew a little stronger. Now when the church has a barbecue, they make sure to serve halal meat, so that Muslim friends will feel

welcome. They are planning two projects together, one to help the homeless and another to tutor local children.

Pastor Jim Wallis knew about Steve's church's work. He was negotiating with CNN, the big TV news channel, about the fact that they kept putting out 'bad news' stories about Islam. 'Why don't you ever show good news?' he asked. CNN said they didn't know of any good news stories about American Muslims, so Jim sent them to interview the Muslims and Christians in Tennessee, and they broadcast an item about the co-operating communities. It ran on the global news service.

Over 7500 miles away, in a small community in Kashmir, a group of Muslim men were watching TV together, and saw the news item. Afterwards they were silent. They were surprised. They had been thinking that all Americans hated them, and were against Islam. One of the community's leaders said to the others: 'God just spoke to us through this man.' Another said, 'How could we try to kill these people when they give a welcome like this?' A third man went straight to the local Christian church and voluntarily cleaned it, inside and out. Touched by the neighbourliness of the Christians in Tennessee, the Muslims in Kashmir decided to be good neighbours as well.

Steve Stone was at home when the phone rang - a call from Kashmir. A man whom he had never met told him they had been watching CNN when the segment on Heartsong Church was aired. 'We are now trying to be good neighbors, too. Tell your congregation we do not hate them, we love them, and for the rest of our lives we are going to take care of that little church near us, just as you have cared for the Muslims in your district.'

# PRACTICE

## Non Sacramental Reconciliation Celebration

(Helen Anne Johnson)

### Introduction

The following prayer celebration was designed to be used in Grades 5/6

- At the conclusion of a unit of work on Reconciliation, Community or Relationships;
- When relationships have been damaged;
- Prior to a class Eucharist;
- End of term.

The basic structure of the celebration is

1. Welcome/introduction
2. Communal expression of sorrow
3. Scripture
4. Quiet personal reflection
5. Ritual of forgiveness
6. Concluding hymn/prayer

A vital means of ensuring that the celebration is meaningful and prayerful is setting the right atmosphere. It is wise not to use the classroom if possible, instead use the prayer-room (if available), sanctuary or library. It is also essential to have the room prepared well before hand so the children will come into a peaceful, calm, aromatic environment. The new venue tells the children that something special is about to take place.

There is very little teacher input in these ceremonies, thus allowing the Spirit to do the healing, instructing and directing. These services are fundamentally opportunities for the child and God to communicate and interact and not a time for instruction from the teacher. Mindful that one of the aims of good liturgy is to teach, the format of the ceremony, particularly the Ritual of Forgiveness accomplishes this.

It can be more effective *to tell* the gospel text rather than read it. This allows the children to become part of the story and to be included in the scene where the events took place. This method tends to touch the children personally and more deeply (Jesus is speaking to *me* personally). In telling the gospel, endeavour to speak slowly, in a meditative tone, leaving pauses for the children to capture the scene, dialogue and people involved. While it is not a guided meditation, it needs to be a reflective retelling of a deeply personal story that will have a lasting influence on the child. After the gospel has been shared, it is meaningful to put a copy of the actual words of Jesus in front of the prayer table near the picture.

The Ritual of Forgiveness helps to make tangible the healing touch of Jesus. Although very simple these activities seem to provide an element of reality and humanness to the deep mystery of God's forgiveness and compassion. Because no specific preparation of the ritual has taken place, the teacher may need to demonstrate the required action to ensure that the children can be involved without stress or anxiety.

## Celebration

### *We have to be happy and celebrate*

Your brother was lost and is now found, he was dead and is now alive (Luke 15: 11)

#### *Setting*

- Prayer-room/sanctuary  
Table containing:
- Picture of prodigal son;
  - Bowl of coals;
  - Flowers;
  - Large candle.

#### *Motivators*

- Incense and charcoal;  
Text of Scripture;  
Words and music of hymn;  
Reflective music;  
Words of prayer on card.

*Children gather in a circle around table for the ceremony*

#### **Welcome (Teacher)**

Jesus calls us to come to his Father for his forgiveness when we recognise and acknowledge the wrong we have done. His Father will always welcome us back, love and forgive us any time we ask his pardon. Today, we come to celebrate this gift of pardon in a special ceremony, so let us all pray.

#### **Prayer (All)**

Jesus, you came to show us how to live and love as children of the kingdom. Walk beside us as we reflect on our response to your call to love each other as much as you love us. Amen.

#### **Scripture Reading**

Teacher tells the story of the “Loving Father” while children focus on the picture. In the retelling of the story, emphasis is placed on

- Son – realisation of his wrong-doing;
- Father – constant waiting and watching;
- Joyous reconciliation/reunion.

#### **Silent Time for Reflection (Reflective music)**

#### **Guided Response (Teacher)**

Let us now review our own relationship with God and those around us. Recall a time when:

- I reached out to others.
- I put another’s need before my own.
- I spent time with someone, lonely, needy or different.
- I shared my belongings cheerfully.
- I contributed to the peace and harmony at home/school.
- I forgave someone who hurt me.
- I acted with honesty and integrity.

*Now be aware of one area in your life for which you need to ask forgiveness ...*

#### **Short pause**

#### **Ritual of Forgiveness (Teacher)**

To symbolise our readiness to always seek to grow closer to Jesus and those around us, let us place a few grains of incense on the coals and quietly pray:

**Father forgive me for ...** (prayed silently by each learner)

As each learner is returning to his/her place in the circle, all say:

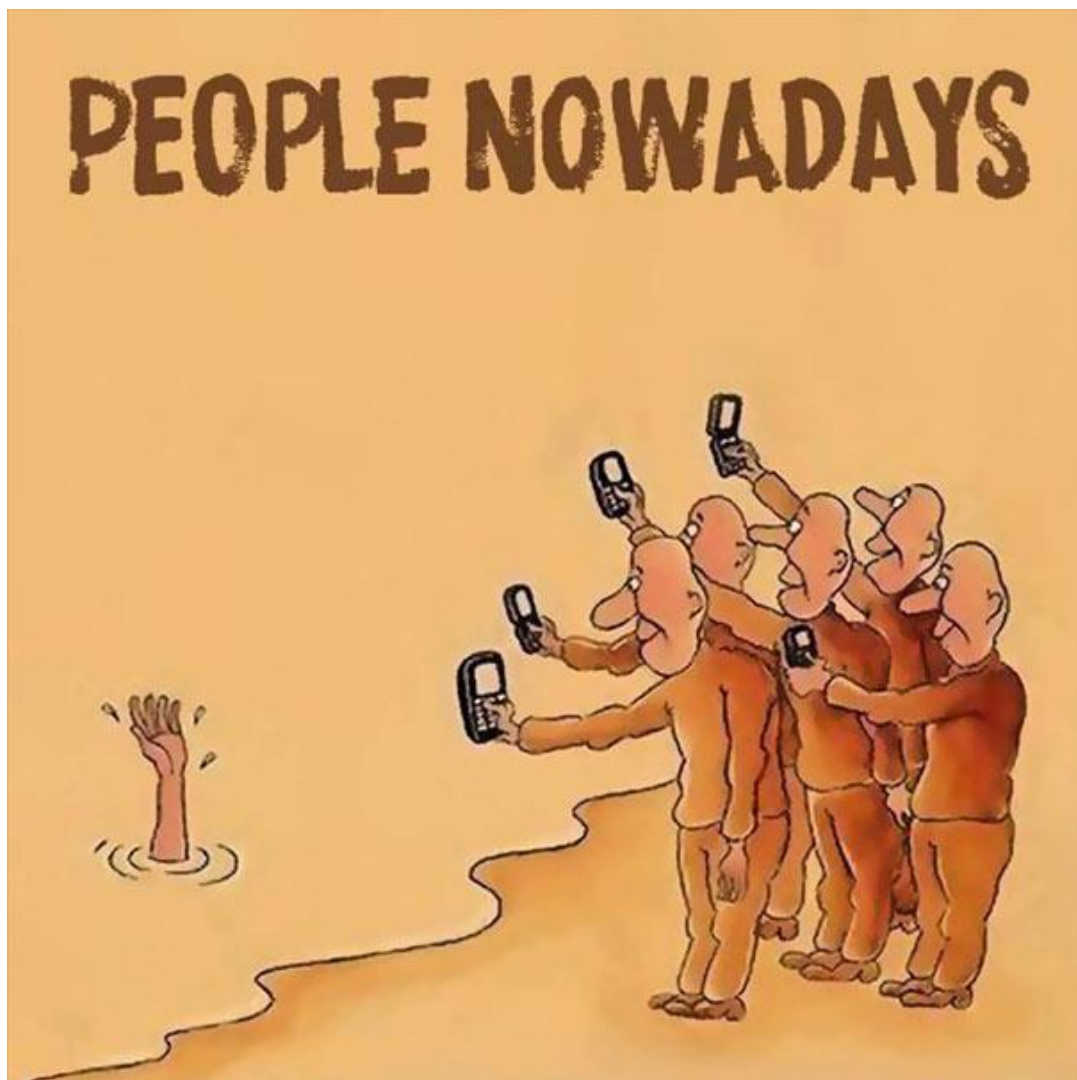
**(N), your sins are forgiven.**

When all have participated, the final hymn is sung.

### Final Hymn

*Peace to You and Me*. C Landry, *Hi God 3* or another appropriate song.

It is meaningful to hold this ceremony prior to break, so it can be followed by a sharing of a special lunch.





## Nun presents Razzie award in Hollywood

The Southern Cross, March 4 to March 10, 2015



By Lisa Gutierrez

MOVIE critic Sister Rose Pacatte covered her first red carpet event in January, scoring a spot in the media scrum at the Los Angeles premiere of Kevin Costner's new movie, *Black or White*. Watching the parade of stars, agents and handlers pass her by, she wondered if anyone would stop and talk to her.

"Who expects to see a nun there?" she figured. When Paula Newsome, one of the movie's stars, walked past, she assessed Sr Rose in her blue Daughters of St Paul habit and asked: "Are you really a nun?" "I am," said Sr Rose.

"You never know," Ms Newsome said, laughing. The ice finally broken, Sr Rose ended up interviewing Ms Newsome, Kevin Costner and their co-star Octavia Spencer for her TV series, *The INNdustry with Sister Rose* from the sidelines of the red carpet.

Sr Rose took centre stage at an even bigger Hollywood event—the annual Golden Raspberry Awards, better known as the Razzies. For 35 years the tongue-in-cheek, Razzies have "honoured" the worst of Hollywood—bad acting, bad writing, bad directing, bad movies. Think of them as the opposite Oscars. In fact, the Razzies traditionally take place the night before the hallowed Academy Awards.

This year, the Razzies for the first time included a new honour—the Redeemer Award—for an actor who has made up for his or her past transgressions against cinema with better work.

Sr Rose was picked to present the award, which went to Ben Affleck. He was nominated for the Redeemer along with Jennifer Aniston, Mike Myers, Kristen Stewart and Keanu Reeves. The winner was chosen by votes cast on the movie review website *RottenTomatoes.com*.

"Nuns are all about redemption, right?" said Sr Rose, who writes reviews on her *Patheos.com* blog, "Sister Rose at the Movies," and for the *National Catholic Reporter*. "Our culture is a redemptive culture. We like a comeback kid. Everybody makes mistakes and everybody deserves another chance," she said in an interview.

Sr Rose was the perfect person to hand out the new award, said Mo Murphy, co-owner and executive producer of the Razzies. Not only does she have the journalistic credentials—Sr Rose is director of the California-based Pauline Centre for Media Studies—she also recognises good filmmaking, said Murphy. The Razzies producer recalled *The New York Times* profile of Sr Rose from 2013 that noted how she reviews movies based on how they shed light on the human

experience. “We want to put her on the map,” said Mr Murphy. “She’s very cool. And she’s got a sense of humour.”

The ceremony, which was not televised, took place at the Montalban Theatre for the performing arts in Hollywood.

The Academy Awards are always Hollywood’s biggest weekend of the year. But unlike celebrities who were busy getting their red-carpet wardrobes ready before Oscar night, Sr Rose already knew what she’d be wearing for her big evening out. “Basic blue,” she said, “from the House of St Paul”.—CNS

## Meditation Seminars

### TEACHING MEDITATION TO CHILDREN

**Booking for these events is now open. Please consult your local CIE or Catholic Schools Office.**



The Catholic Institute of Education brings to South Africa two leaders in the field of teaching meditation to children. Dr Cathy Day and Ernie Christie have earned international acclaim for their pioneering work of introducing meditation to children and teachers in countries as diverse as Australia, the USA & Canada, Poland and Singapore. They will base the seminar on their experience of implementing Christian meditation in 31 schools in Townsville, Australia.

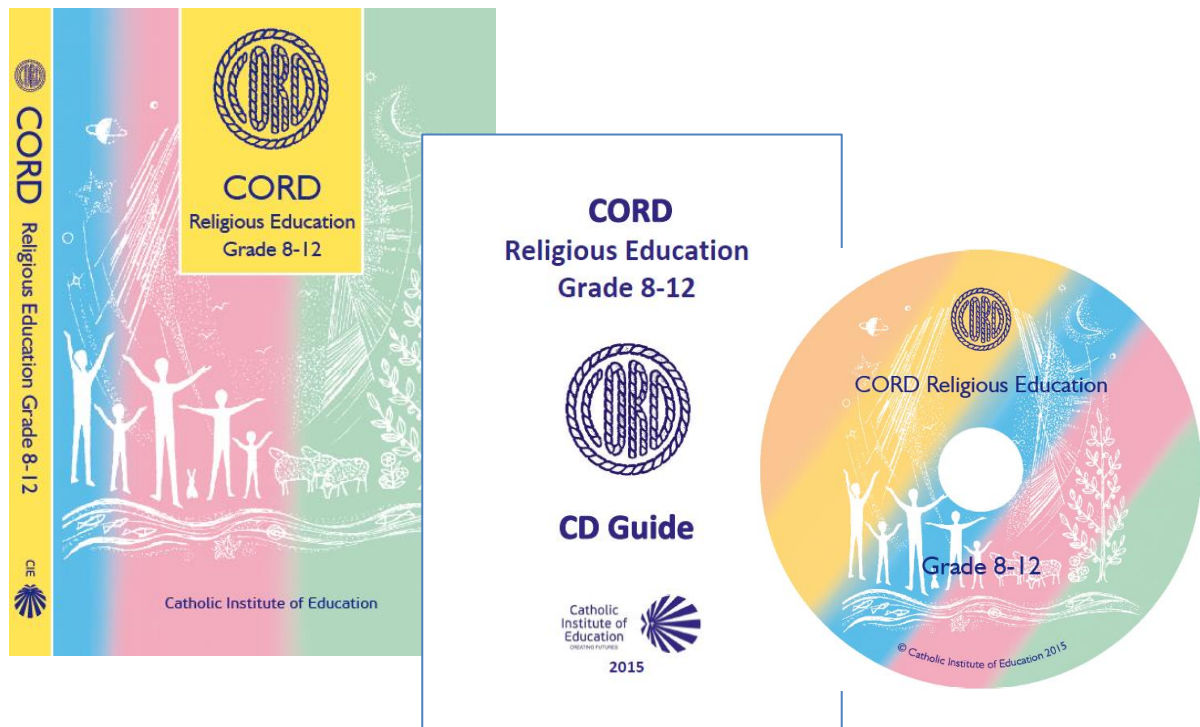
DATE	DAY	PLACE	VENUE	TIME
21 September	Monday	Durban	Glenmore Pastoral Centre, 10 Donlene Crescent, Glenmore	12:00 -15:00
23 September	Wednesday	Pretoria	Denis Adami Hall, Woodlands Drive, Queenswood	13:00 -16:00
25 September	Friday	Johannesburg	St Charles Catholic Church, Road No 3, Victory Park	18:00 -21:00
26 September	Saturday	Johannesburg	Paulines Cultural Centre, cnr Queen St & Cumberland Rd, Kensington	09:00 -12:00
28 September	Monday	Bloemfontein	St Joseph’s Christian Brothers College, Waverley Road, Bayswater	18:00 -21:00
29 September	Tuesday	Johannesburg	St Augustine College, Ley Road, Victory Park	14:30 -16:30
30 September	Wednesday	Cape Town	Holy Cross Provincial House, Robert Sobukwe Rd, Parow Valley	13:00 -15:00
30 September	Wednesday	Cape Town	Church of the Resurrection, 43 Janssens Avenue, Tableview	19:00 -21:00
1 October	Thursday	Cape Town	St Joseph’s Marist College, Belmont Road, Rondebosch	13:00 -15:00

## Resources

The CORD Curriculum was formerly available in hard copy in printed files at a cost of R1000 for Grades 8-12.

We offer a **NEW digital version** which comes on CD in a case together with an explanatory booklet at an affordable price of **R200**.

The CD includes material from the original file together with lessons and materials for each curriculum process in Grades 8-12.



## Core Curriculum

The development of a national core curriculum for Religious Education in South African Catholic schools (Gr R-12) will be a major focus over the next few years. As a first step, the CIE is engaged in a consultative process. In a round of workshops in 2015, teachers are invited to complete a questionnaire to share their experience and views. Follow-up workshops will provide feedback on the results of this questionnaire and provide an opportunity for key issues. Schools are also invited to participate in a learner questionnaire. All interested parties will be kept informed of developments through a regular newsletter.



Professional Society of Religious Educators