The Journal of Dialogic Ethics: Interfaith and Interhuman Perspectives 4, no. 2 (Fall 2025): 137–50.
DOI: 10.5840/jde20254215

Ethics of Interreligious Dialogue: A Catholic Perspective

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Abstract: This article seeks to present a Catholic perspective on the ethic that emerges from interreligious dialogue. It argues that such an ethic refers to the values that the Church protects and promotes as it enacts dialogue with non-Christian entities like Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, or African Traditional Religion. For the Catholic Church, interreligious dialogue is a journey of love fraught with challenges, including the commitment to listen to hard truths about the self and the other, the commitment to answer the other's tough questions about the self, and the commitment to learn about the other in order to grow in self-understanding.

Keywords: Catholic Church; interreligious dialogue; ethics; religious other; communicative encounter

Introduction

Several scholars, particularly those in the discipline of religions, have engaged the topic of interreligious dialogue. For example, Catherine Cornille (2013a; 2013b) explained dialogue, interreligious dialogue, and the conditions for fruitful interreligious dialogue. Moreover, Leonard Swidler (2013) and Petra Dijkuizen (2015) have provided a historical narrative of the evolution of the interreligious dialogical movement. Furthermore, Douglas Pratt (2021) focused "on formal and representative developments of contemporary Christian engagement in interfaith relations, taking something of a case study approach in respect to the WCC [World Council of Churches] and the RCC [Roman Catholic Church]" (181). All these studies have significantly deepened our understanding of interfaith dialogue.

Besides, some communication scholars have looked at the construct of interreligious dialogue from a Catholic perspective. James A. Keaten and Charles Soukup (2009), for instance, have provided a model for interfaith dialogue. Additionally, Gregory Baum (2011) has argued that interreligious-dialogue skeptics can learn from the Catholic Church's dialogical engagement with non-Christian entities if they look at the Church's approach through an Enlightenment

prism. Clearly, then, interreligious dialogue as a construct and movement has been on the radar of scholars for quite some time.

The present article, however, is interested in the ethic that emerges from the enactment of interreligious dialogue, that is, the values that emerge from the how and what of interreligious dialogue. In other words, taking a cue from Johannesen et al. (2007), this article seeks to construct an ethic from how the Catholic Church thinks interreligious dialogue should be conducted and the values that it promotes and protects in communicative encounters with the religious other. Accordingly, the article takes a normative approach to interreligious dialogic ethics as it seeks to answer this central question: what values are promoted and protected when people from different religious traditions, especially adherents of the Catholic faith and non-Christian religions, dialogue with each other?

Following this introductory section, the article next reviews relevant literature. It further presents a narrative of Catholic views on interreligious dialogue as examined and explicated in official Church documents, namely, *The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission* (Secretariat for non-Christian Relations 1984); *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of Jesus Christ* (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue 1991); and *Dialogue in Truth and Charity: Pastoral Orientations for Interreligious Dialogue* (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue 2014). The essay subsequently constructs a normative ethics of interreligious dialogue and concludes by highlighting the key points of what constitutes Catholic interreligious dialogue and the ethic that emerges therefrom.

Scholarly Perspectives on Interreligious Dialogue

Broadly speaking, interreligious dialogue as a construct refers to the communicative engagement between different religious entities (see Cornille 2013a; Swidler 2013). As David M. McCarthy (2000) expressed, interreligious dialogue refers to "perspectives on how and why participants in various religions ought to talk with one another" (74). For Cornille (2013b), interreligious dialogue is "a constructive engagement between religious texts, teachings, and practices oriented toward the possibility of change and growth" (20). Similarly, Francis X. Clooney (2010a, 10; see also Niebauer 2017) asserted, "Interreligious dialogue points to actual conversations, sometimes formal and academic, sometimes simply interpersonal conversations among persons of different religious traditions willing to listen to one another and share their stories of faith and values." This view suggests that interreligious dialogue refers to the communication that takes place between at least two religious traditions, that is, either between two Christian denominations or between a Christian denomination like the Catholic Church and Islam.

However, the Catholic Church's conceptualization of interreligious dialogue is much more focused. In fact, the Church distinguishes between the

dialogue it conducts with other Christian denominations (ecumenical dialogue) and that with non-Christian entities (interreligious dialogue) (Arinze 2001; see also Nweke 2017). For the Church, interreligious dialogue is a communicative interaction between itself and adherents of non-Christian entities such as Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism (Arinze 2001).

Apart from seeking to unpack the meaning of interreligious dialogue, scholars have identified different models of interfaith dialogue. Paul F. Knitter (2013), for instance, talked about three categories of interreligious dialogue, namely, dialogue of theology, dialogue of spirituality, and dialogue of action. These categories, according to Knitter (2013), were based on the Vatican's perspective on interreligious dialogue. Sharing Knitter's perspective, Douglas Pratt (2021) pointed out that one might come out with different models of interreligious dialogue, depending on whether one is looking at the Vatican or the World Council of Churches. He identified the following as the Vatican's models of interreligious dialogue: ambassadorial dialogue, propaedeutic dialogue, and humanitarian dialogue (Pratt 2021, 196). However, he identified systematic dialogue, communitarian dialogue, and relational dialogue as the models of interreligious dialogue from the perspective of the World Council of Churches (194).

Furthermore, a review of extant literature shows a keen scholarly interest in the conditions or requirements for interreligious dialogue. Conceptualizing these conditions as commandments that should guide the conduct of interreligious dialogue, Swidler (1985) proposed ten of them. Firstly, Swidler (1985) stated that the purpose of interreligious dialogue is to grow and change in the way we perceive reality. Secondly, interreligious dialogue must be two-sided (Swidler 1985). Thirdly, interreligious participants must be honest and sincere, and, fourthly, we must assume that the religious other at the table of interreligious dialogue is also honest and sincere. Next, interreligious dialogical participants must clearly define themselves. Further, they must not predetermine the points of disagreement. Additionally, participants must understand that they are all equal. Moreover, authentic interreligious dialogue requires mutual trust on the part of participants. Participants must be willing to be self-critical and "eventually must attempt to experience the partner's religion 'from within'" (Swidler 1985, 33).

Unlike Swidler (2013), Cornille (2013b) has proposed five conditions for the fruitful enactment of interreligious dialogue, or, as Knitter (2013, 134) conceptualized them, "virtue ethics for dialogue," that is, humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy, and hospitality. For Cornille (2013b), to be humble means to be willing to change one's perspective within one's faith tradition, recognizing the human being's inability to grasp revealed truth fully. Besides, interreligious participants must be committed to their religious traditions. Moreover, participants must understand the interconnection between their own faith tradition and that of the religious other. Such an interconnection materializes in the common interest religious organizations show in socio-political causes like "poverty, hunger, homelessness, war, or natural disasters" (25). Interreligious dialogic participants must also demonstrate empathy toward the religious other by "stretching [their] religious imagination beyond the categories of [their] own

religion and gain[ing] some understanding of, and resonance with, religious teachings and practices other than one 's own" (26). Finally, hospitality as a condition for interreligious dialogue "involves recognition of actual truth in another religion and hospitality toward integrating that truth in one's own tradition" (26).

Similar to Cornille's (2013b) five-point conditions for interreligious dialogue, Knitter (2013) suggested five guidelines for socially engaged dialogue: compassion, conversion, collaboration, comprehension, and communion (144–46). Knitter (2013) explained that the compassion that both a Christian and Muslim, for example, would show to the same suffering victims might surprisingly be extended toward each other. In this way, compassion serves as a condition for the initial encounter between the two people from different faith traditions. Following compassion is conversion, a change in perspective. As Knitter (2013, 145) explained,

> The feeling of compassion by which the suffering of others has touched our lives will call for a reciprocal response by which we reach back to them in the determination to touch and affect their lives. Compassion will call for *con-version*; otherwise it is not real compassion. And con-version is the resolve to, literally, *con-vertere*, to turn things around in one's own life for the sake of others.

As they both show compassion to the same suffering victims and one another, as well as change their old perspectives, the Christian and Muslim begin "to [act] for them and with them on their behalf" (Knitter 2013, 145). In other words, following their change of attitude toward one another, the Christian and Muslim move on to mutual understanding (or comprehension). Finally, the two interreligious dialoguers move to a level of communion in which they share religious rituals together in the same space. Knitter (2013) referenced his past experience of working to broker peace among enemies who belonged to different faith traditions to buttress his point:

> Such "communions" took place in rituals in which we read from and reflected on our sacred scriptures together, prayed or expressed our intentions together, listened to our music or chanting together, and also, simply sat in silence together in the same space. (146)

Clearly, for Knitter (2013), the ideal interreligious dialogue involves several stages, beginning with compassion and culminating in the communion of the parties.

Looking at the literature, this article finds that scholarly interest in the subject of interreligious dialogue has generally focused on meaning and applicability. In other words, relevant scholarly interest has sought to answer the questions: What is interreligious dialogue? How is it different from non-Catholic views? What are the models of interreligious dialogue? And what are the conditions for the enactment of interreligious dialogue?

For the present article, in spite of the keen interest scholars have largely shown in Catholic perspective on interreligious dialogue, the question of the ethic that emerges from the communicative encounter between parties from Christian

and non-Christian faith traditions has yet to receive attention from communication studies. In other words, communication scholars have not yet made any effort to attend to the question of the values that should guide interreligious dialogue nor to focus on the values that Catholic interreligious dialogue protects and promotes. For the present article, these are legitimate questions that deserve scholarly attention.

The Nature of Catholic Interreligious Dialogue

This section engages the nature of Catholic interreligious dialogue through the prism of constructive hermeneutics, which involves the article immersing itself with an open mind in the three main documents on Catholic interreligious dialogue (see Thiselton 2009; Gadamer 1989). To that extent, the essay acknowledges that it comes to the subject of Catholic interreligious dialogue with a perspective shaped by a complex mix of the present historical moment, as well as African, American, and Catholic values. It accordingly comes to the question of the Catholic view on interreligious dialogue with an enlarged mentality and a listening attitude (see Arendt 1982). In this section, the article examines the nature of interreligious dialogue as conceptualized by the Catholic Church by answering the following question: How does the Catholic Church communicate about and enact interreligious dialogue in its engagement with non-Christian religious entities?

As is clear from the three documents referenced above, interreligious dialogue is a communicative encounter involving two or more religious entities with the purpose of arriving at a mutual understanding of what each party believes (see also PCID 1997, 2006). As the Secretariat for Non-Christian Relations (SNR) (1984) expressed it, "dialogue . . . means not only discussion, but also includes all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment" (§3). Implicit in this earlier official Church definition is the recognition that the phenomenon of interreligious dialogue is enacted at both verbal and nonverbal communicative levels—that is, interreligious dialogue is both a discussion and a relation with the religious other. Moreover, the goal of this interfaith communicative encounter is to engender mutual understanding and mutual enrichment—that is, as interreligious dialogue parties relate verbally and nonverbally, they come to know and appreciate one another's belief system, learn from one another, and possibly grow in their respective faith traditions.

This hermeneutic of the Church's definition of interreligious dialogue is consistent with the view expressed in the second main document on the same subject published by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) in 1991. According to PCID (1991), interreligious dialogue refers to

> all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions. (§9)

In other words, interreligious dialogue is not a mere conversation that different religious groups have with each other. Rather, it is enacted at the nexus of interfaith relationship, one that is positive and constructive. This relationship is both interpersonal and inter-communal, framed by the search for truth and respect for religious liberty. This search for truth consists in interreligious dialogue partners' witnessing to their respective faith traditions even as they explore what the religious other believes.

Building on earlier conceptualizations, PCID in 2014 defined interreligious dialogue in a much deeper and more expansive way:

> In the context of religious plurality, it means not only discussion, but also constructive relations with individuals and communities of other religions, which, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom, are directed at mutual understanding. It includes witness and the exploration of respective religious convictions. With reference to the initiatives of the Catholic Church to reach out to people of other religions, dialogue is also understood as an attitude of respect and friendship which permeates or should permeate all those activities constituting her evangelizing mission in the world. (§2)

In this definition, PCID (2014) brought coherence to its earlier conceptualizations in 1984 and 1991. The following coordinates are significant for an appreciation of interreligious dialogue: (a) the reality of religious plurality as a context; (b) interreligious dialogue as a discussion; (c) interreligious dialogue as a constructive relationship; (d) interreligious dialogue as a response to the need to search for the truth; (e) interreligious dialogue as a communicative encounter among members of religious groups who enjoy religious freedom as a fundamental right (see Pope Paul VI 1965, *Dignitatis Humanae*); (f) mutual understanding as the goal of interreligious dialogue; (g) witnessing as a key component of interreligious dialogue; (h) exploring the faith tradition of dialogue partners as part of the orientation of interreligious dialogue; (i) respecting the religious other as a key component of interreligious dialogue; (j) and establishing friendship with the religious other as a key orientation of interreligious dialogue.

As a communicative encounter, interreligious dialogue, from a Catholic perspective, creates the possibility for partners to learn about and understand each other. In other words, the communicative space created by interreligious dialogue makes it possible for non-Christian religious groups to be "known honestly and esteemed justly by Christians, and that in their turn non-Christians can adequately know and esteem Christian doctrine and life" (SNR 1984, §4). Beyond ensuring mutual understanding and appreciation, interreligious dialogue allows Christians to meet non-Christians "in order to walk together towards truth and to work together in projects of common concern" (SNR 1984, §13).

As is clear from the Church's definition of interreligious dialogue, partners search for the truth in complete freedom:

> Truth, however, is to be sought in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication, and dialogue. In the course of these, men explain to one another the truth they have discovered or claim to

> have discovered in order to help one another in their search for the truth (Pope Paul VI 1965, §3 as quoted in SNR 1984, §18).

Part of the truth which the Church has found in its dialogic encounters with other religions is the facticity of God's presence in the great non-Christian traditions of the globe, a divine presence expressed variously as "elements which are true and good," "precious things, both religious and human," "seeds of contemplation," "elements of truth and grace," "seeds of the Word," and "rays of the truth which illumines all mankind" (SNR 1984, §26). It is this indubitable presence of God in non-Christian milieus that imposes on the Church the obligation of interreligious dialogue (§26). This particular dialogue, in the view of the Catholic Church, "is a manner of acting, an attitude and a spirit which guides one's conduct. It implies concern, respect, and hospitality towards the other. It leaves room for the other person's identity, his modes of expression, and his values" (§29). In other words, the existential reality of the Church must be framed by the register of dialogue. As PCID (1991, §39) rightly pointed out, "(Interreligious) dialogue is fundamental to the Church, which is called to collaborate in God's plan with her methods of presence, respect and love towards all persons."

Yet interreligious dialogue recognizes the limitations of interlocutors. The human reality is that no one is perfect. Often the limitations might be due to immoral choices or inaccurate interpretation of divine revelation (see PCID 1991, §31, §79). Yet, in spite of the existential reality of interlocutor limitations, the Catholic view of interreligious dialogue is that it calls for openness to the religious other's traditions. This openness is made possible through "attentive dialogue that recogniz[es] and accept[s] cultural values which respect the human person's dignity and transcendent destiny" (§46).

Dialogic openness, though, does not ignore fundamental differences between traditions. As PCID (1991, §31) has pointed out, "It must, where necessary, recognize that there is incompatibility between some fundamental elements of the Christian religion and some aspects of such traditions." In the face of intractable differences, dialogue partners are invited to challenge each other "in a peaceful spirit" (§32) over their traditions and to respond when challenged.

For the Catholic Church, the foundation of its commitment to dialogue with other religions is both anthropological and theological (PCID 1991; PCID 2014). Anthropologically, the Church is "closely united to men in their life and work"; therefore, "Christ's disciples hope to render to others true witness of Christ and to work for this salvation, even where they are not able to proclaim Christ fully" (PCID 1991, §39; see also Vatican II 2007). Theologically, "God, in an age-long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind. In faithfulness to the divine initiative, the Church too must enter into a dialogue of salvation with all men and women" (PCID 1991, §38). In other words, just as God's relationship with humanity is grounded in dialogue, so must the Church dialogue with the peoples of the world as it seeks to bring the word of God to them.

The Church's interreligious dialogue with non-Christians aims at mutual understanding, friendly relations, witnessing to interlocutors' respective beliefs, and the explorations of their religious convictions, as well as the opportunity to

grow in their respective faith traditions (PCID 1991, §40). In other words, as PCID (1991) explained, interreligious dialogue aims

> to eliminate tensions and conflicts, and potential confrontations by a better understanding among the various religious cultures of any given region. It may contribute to purifying cultures from any dehumanizing elements, and thus be an agent of transformation. It can also help to uphold certain traditional cultural values which are under threat from modernity and the levelling down which indiscriminate internationalization may bring with it. (§46)

Clearly, positive interreligious dialogue leads to peaceful coexistence among people from different religious traditions, a reality which cannot be ignored.

For the Catholic Church, interreligious dialogue has four main forms (SNR 1984, §29, §31, §33, §35; see also PCID 1991; PCID 2014), namely, the "dialogue of life" (SNR, §29), "dialogue of deeds" (SNR 1984, §31), "dialogue of specialists" (SNR 1984, §33), and "dialogue of religious experience" (SNR 1984, §35). The dialogue of life is the form of dialogue that all Christians engage in with people they live and work with (see Arinze 2001; Hall 2005). In other words, the dialogue of life may occur in a "family, social, educational, artistic, economic, or political" environment (SNR 1984, §30). Within such environments, people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit in order to share their joys and sorrows, as well as other human problems and preoccupations (PCID 2014, §34). The dialogue of deeds or action, however, refers to Christian "collaboration with others for goals of a humanitarian, social, economic, or political nature which are directed towards the liberation and advancement of mankind" (SNR 1984, §31; see also PCID 1991; 2014; Arinze 2001). The dialogue of specialists or "theological exchange" (PCID 2014, §34) is the form of dialogue that Chrisitan theologians have with specialists from other faith traditions (SNR 1984; PCID 1991; 2014; see also Arinze 2001). Within this dialogic context, dialogue partners may "confront, deepen, and enrich their respective religious heritages or . . . apply something of their expertise to the problems which must be faced by mankind in the course of its history" (SNR 1984, §33). By so doing, specialists deepen their understanding of those religions represented at the table of dialogue (PCID 2014). The result is that expert participants "come to a mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's spiritual values and cultural categories and promote communion and fellowship among people" (SNR 1984, §34). Finally, the dialogue of religious experience is the encounter that occurs when participants, deeply rooted in their faith traditions

> share their experiences of prayer, contemplation, faith, and duty, as well as their expressions and ways of searching for the Absolute. This type of dialogue can be a mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation for promoting and preserving the highest values and spiritual ideals of man. It leads naturally to each partner communicating to the other the reasons for his own faith. (SNR 1984, §35; see also Arinze 2001; Gerard Hall 2005; Knitter 2013)

What emerges from this dialogic encounter is, on the one hand, the truth about God's self-revelation to human beings regardless of their religious background, and, on the other, the truth about every human being's desire to search for God.

Moreover, the Church has clarified the attitudes or dispositions that interreligious dialogue interlocutors must possess: "balanced attitude" (PCID 1991, §47), "religious conviction" (PCID 1991, §48), "openness to the truth" (PCID 1991, §49), and "new dimensions of faith" (PCID 1991, §50). To have a balanced attitude, participants in interreligious dialogue must on the one hand be open, receptive, unselfish, impartial, committed to the truth, and willing to be transformed. As well, they must accept differences and contradictions (PCID 1991, §47). On the other hand, religious conviction as a disposition means that participants enter the arena of interreligious dialogue firmly grounded in their faith.

Besides, openness to the truth during the interreligious dialogic process suggests that though Catholics, for instance, might have received the fullness of truth, it does not follow that they have fully grasped it or are actually living it on daily basis. In this regard, being open to the truth means redirecting one's steps toward that which has been abandoned or has not been fully understood. As PCID (1991, §50) explained,

> In the last analysis truth is not a thing we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed. This is an unending process. While keeping their identity intact, Christians must be prepared to learn and to receive from and through others the positive values of their traditions. Through dialogue they may be moved to give up ingrained prejudices, to revise preconceived ideas, and even sometimes to allow the understanding of their faith to be purified.

Finally, dialogic interactions with religious others can deepen the religious convictions of participants. Having their faith deepened does not suggest a lack of religious conviction, though. As PCID (2014, §3) made clear, "Those who promote interreligious dialogue must be persons well-formed in their particular traditions, possessing a clear religious identity." Explaining how interreligious encounter can positively impact the Christian, PCID (1991, §50) declared, "Far from weakening their own faith, true dialogue will deepen it. They will become increasingly aware of their Christian identity and perceive more clearly the distinctive elements of the Christian message." And as they come to realize the active presence of Jesus outside the physical boundaries of the Church, "their faith will gain new dimensions" (§50).

In 2014, PCID reconceptualized the above dispositions as personal qualities and attitudes that are necessary for interreligious dialogue, including "firmness of religious conviction; readiness to understand people of other religious traditions without pretence, prejudice, or close-mindedness; genuine love; humility; prudence; honesty, and patience," as well as both theoretical and reciprocal respect (§§40–41).

By coming to the table of interreligious dialogue with the four attitudes, participants can navigate the human obstacles that every so often undermine

interreligious dialogue. PCID (2014) listed the following as the obstacles that usually undercut authentic interreligious dialogue:

> a) insufficient grounding in one's own faith;
> b) insufficient knowledge and understanding of the belief and practices of other religions, leading to a lack of appreciation for their significance and even at times to misrepresentation;
> c) socio-political factors or some burdens of the past;
> d) wrong understanding of the meaning of terms such as conversion, baptism, dialogue, etc.;
> e) self-sufficiency, lack of openness leading to defensive or aggressive attitudes;
> f) a lack of conviction with regard to the value of interreligious dialogue, which some may see as a task reserved to specialists, and others as a sign of weakness or even a betrayal of the faith;
> g) suspicion about the other's motives in dialogue;
> h) a polemical spirit when expressing religious convictions;
> i) intolerance, which is often aggravated by association with political, economic, racial and ethnic factors;
> j) a lack of reciprocity in dialogue which can lead to frustration;
> k) certain features of the present religious climate, e.g., growing materialism, religious indifference, and the multiplication of religious sects which creates confusion and raises new problems. (§52)

With the right kind of attitudes, interreligious participants should be able to contain these obstacles to authentic dialogue. This authentic dialogue in a pluralistic religious environment seeks nothing but "a clear understanding of the common good, acknowledges the presence of legitimate diversity, respects the human and political rights of all citizens, and promotes a shared determination" to construct a world of justice and solidarity (PCID 2006, 634).

A Catholic Interreligious Dialogic Ethic

Based on the above articulation of the Catholic understanding of the nature of interreligious dialogue, this article identifies the following coordinates as constituting some of the values that ought to be protected and promoted in the communicative encounter with the religious other: identity, difference, witness/testimony, listening, responding, forgiveness and trust, recognition and acknowledgment, affirmation, interconnectedness/relationship, and narrative participation. This article argues that the coordinates here listed constitute the defining values that Catholic interreligious dialogue protects and promotes.

In the first place, an authentic interreligious dialogue values the distinctive identities of interlocutors. In other words, those who engage in interfaith dialogue must have a clear understanding of who they are along with the religious traditions that they represent. Besides, interreligious dialogue protects and promotes diversity or difference, not uniformity. Thus, the whole purpose of the dialogue between the Catholic Church and non-Christian religions is not purposed

to proselytize, to turn non-Christians into Catholics. In fact, within the dialogic space created by interfaith encounters, differences of religious traditions and differences of spiritualities must be acknowledged, respected, and affirmed (see also Anderson et al. 2004).

Moreover, interreligious dialogic encounters protect and promote the communicative act of witnessing to one's faith at the table of dialogue. For the Catholic Church, religious liberty is a fundamental human right. Accordingly, interreligious dialogue participants must be able to witness freely to the truth of their faith. But for this communicative act to succeed, dialogue partners must listen with empathy and respect. In this way, they are be able to understand and appreciate the faith tradition of the religious other and even challenge the other's doctrinal positions and religious practices—a challenge that calls for a fitting response.

Furthermore, interreligious dialogue between the Church and non-Christians protects and promotes the value of mutual forgiveness and trust. If the communication between the Church and other religions can be conceptualized as a turning toward the other in sincerity, then such an encounter must necessarily involve the act of letting go of past wrongs and the forging of mutual trust as dialogue partners recognize their common humanity demonstrated in their common search for answers to life's deep questions regarding human dignity and humanity's transcendent destiny. At the end of the day, the Catholic and Muslim are both human beings who must deal with the same challenges in the world they live in and share with each other (see Vatican Council II 2007)

Additionally, interreligious dialogue protects and promotes the related values of recognition, acknowledgement, and affirmation. These coordinates are a *sine qua non* for authentic dialogic encounters. As Arinze (2001) pointed out, interreligious dialogue is not a debate; rather, it is an encounter between friends who are committed to talking to each other about their religious beliefs or are willing to work together to resolve common social problems. Accordingly, therefore, they must authentically recognize the value of each other's faith, acknowledge the significant contribution each makes to human flourishing, and subsequently affirm each other.

In recognizing, acknowledging, and affirming each other and their faith traditions, interreligious partners end up establishing deep bonds of friendship and communion. In other words, interfaith dialogue builds interconnectedness and relationships among partners who subsequently engage in narrative participation relating to their common humanity and transcendent destiny.

Conclusion

This article has sought to provide a coherent narrative of ethics of interreligious dialogue from a Catholic perspective. In pursuit of its goal, it engaged three main documents which provide the official position of the Church on the subject. As a communicative encounter between Christians and non-Christians, interreligious dialogue provides space for partners to collaborate in the search for the truth—the

truth about God and the truth about humanity. In the process, interreligious dialogue creates space for personal growth and mutual enrichment, even as it engenders friendly bonds and communion. This communicative reality, which affects humanity and its highest aspirations, protects and promotes the values of identity, difference, witness/testimony, listening, responding, forgiveness and trust, recognition and acknowledgment, affirmation, interconnectedness/ relationship, and narrative participation.

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