

A POINT of VIEW . . .

July 16, 2009, the morning after the first Joint Meeting of the Work/Study Groups for the Synod 2010, Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis

A point of view – a personal strategy – born of nagging uncertainty about how we will “change the policies and practices that hold our own community back from being fully alive” . . . and effectively dialogue “about what changes can be made on a diocesan level to make the church of St. Paul and Minneapolis a sacrament of God’s life” – this when some of our hoped-for partners in dialogue have already named us apostates.

Yet, I embrace the Declaration Against Resignation, trusting a Divine Spirit who moves, at least partly, based on what I contribute to a process. For my part, I will . . .

Ø live in the moment.

Ø come to terms with the likelihood that 1) just some, 2) only a few, 3) none of my fondest dreams and hopes for the Church will be realized before I die.

Ø in the meantime, talk civilly and presume and honor the integrity of those with whom I dialogue. No winning.

Ø find / develop within myself a sense of humor about Church reform.

Ø come to terms with (i.e., seek and embrace the difficult conversion necessary to adopt) the thinking of Hans Kung, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and Cardinal Franz Joseph Koenig on inter / intra faith dialogue.

Kung (as described by James Carroll in *Practicing Catholic*, 281 – 283): Dialogue is more than mere civility. . . . Authentic religious dialogue happens when a believing person who encounters the different beliefs of someone else inevitably winds up *reexamining the foundation of his / [her] own beliefs*. . . . Dialogue becomes the *self-critical examination* of one’s own dogma and tradition *in the presence of the other*, and *in the light of the other’s experience and belief*. . . . Ultimately, dialogue calls for the “investigation of foundations.”

Heschel (as quoted by Carroll, 281): “The *most significant basis for the meeting* of men [and women] of different religious traditions is the level of fear and trembling, of humility and contrition, *where our individual moments of faith are mere waves in the endless ocean of . . . reaching out for God*, where all formulations and articulations appear as understatements, *where our souls are swept away, stripped of pretensions and conceit*. We sense then the tragic insufficiency of human faith. God is greater than religion.”

Koenig (in dialogue with Jesuit theologian Jacques Dupuis, *NCR* 3.21.08): Genuine dialogue must be honest. There must be *no ulterior motives*. Of course, each partner has an aim. It's not meant to be a pointless chat, after all. The *aim is to convince* one's partner of the *soundness of one's arguments*. But the opposite also applies. One must *equally be prepared to allow oneself to be convinced of the soundness of one's partner's arguments* – one must want to gain an insight into them. Dialogue is *not an attempt to persuade or convert* – the aim is to get to know your partner and why he or she believes what they do.

Chuck
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Pilon

Charles Pilon is the author of *Waiting for Mozart: A Novel about Church People Caught in Conflict*. The novel illustrates the daily struggle to realize the vision of Vatican II when the pastor and the active members of a large suburban Catholic parish do not agree on whose Church it is. Can they compose a harmonious community through the fine art of dialogue? To learn more about *Waiting for Mozart* and how to purchase a copy visit <http://waitingformozart.com>
