



Walking God's Paths



1. A New Future: Building Shalom Between Catholics and Jews

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

The facilitator might begin by briefly discussing the handout "Principles for Interreligious Dialogue." Explain that your role as facilitator is to keep the conversation on subject and to enable everyone to have the opportunity to speak. Then proceed to the discussion questions for this session.

1. What do you think that your own identity as a Jew or a Catholic requires of you?

After all who wish to speak to this question have had a chance to do so, the facilitator might observe any patterns of similarity or difference between Jewish and Catholic responses.

2. What most surprised, moved, or disturbed you about the video's overview of the past, present, and future of Catholic-Jewish relations?

The information sheet for session 1 contains a summary of post-*Nostra Aetate* Catholic teachings and *Dabru Emet*. After discussing the question, participants might be referred to the handout in order to acquaint them with recent progress in interfaith relations and with some theological ideas being expressed by Jews and Catholics. Be sure to note *that Nostra Aetate and Dabru Emet do not hold the same weight of authority in their respective communities and that it takes time for the changes expressed in these documents to be appreciated throughout each community.*

3. Fr. Pawlikowski and Rabbi Sandmel said that Catholics and Jews could have different expectations in coming to dialogue. At this point, what do you most want your Catholic or Jewish conversation partner to know about your own faith tradition? What would you most like to know about theirs?

Four decades of Catholic-Jewish dialogue have shown that initially Jews tend to want to speak about civic, political, or social issues, while Catholics tend to want to talk about religious beliefs. Catholics are often most puzzled by Jewish concern for the State of Israel, but Jews are perplexed by the perceived Christian need for an intermediary to God. If these dynamics become evident, the facilitator might draw the group's attention to them and indicate that each topic will be pursued at future dialogue sessions.

4. **Some Jews and Catholics avoid dialogue. Some fear that such conversations are only pretexts for conversion efforts. Others fear that too intimate an understanding of another religious tradition, especially a closely related one, leads to a watering down of their own faith. What do you think?**

As will be explored later in the series, Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity are closely related to one another in terms of their origins and their mutual influence on each other over time. This means that changes in attitude or new knowledge about the Jewish or Christian "other" can pose questions about the understanding of one's own faith. The facilitator might assure participants that virtually all Catholics and Jews who have experienced substantive interfaith dialogue report that their own faith commitments have been deepened and enhanced by grappling with the perspectives of the other tradition.

5. **Rabbi Sandmel and Fr. Pawlikowski both mentioned factors that can make it difficult for Jews and Catholics to understand one another. Can you imagine reasons why the potential rewards of dialogue would make it worthwhile to work to overcome such difficulties?**

The video suggests several possible approaches to this question, including the correction of stereotypes about the other, better understanding of one's own faith tradition, and the collaboration of Jews and Catholics to promote peace and justice. This concluding question is intended to alert participants to future delicate issues and to encourage them to persevere in addressing them.