



SAT-NAV FOR THE PATH OF DIALOGUE

Mind the Gap

- * What you mean to say
- * How you manage to say what you mean
- * What the other person thinks you will say
- * What the other person thinks you said
- * What the other person thinks you meant
- * How others interpret what others tell them you said

Words change their significance for us according to

- * What other words are used along side them
- * Who is saying them
- * Our relationship to the person saying the words to us
- * Where they are said (in what context)
- * Who else is present when they are said
- * Our knowledge of the topic
- * Whether we have prepared ourselves appropriately
- * What else is going on in our lives at the time

Some obstacles to dialogue:

- Fear
- Lack of trust in the other person's goodness, sincerity, and their being a child of God
- Lack of confidence in the validity of one's own experience & insights
- Too much confidence in one's own perspective & convictions
- Flattery, gossip, lies, slander
- Twisting of words, misrepresentation, selective deployment of truth, evasion
- Failing to speak when one should.
- Jumping in too quickly to have one's say

And our ignorance - There is much that we do not know. To start with, God will always remain beyond our ken; we never have our understanding of God 'taped', sorted or settled. Then, we remain a mystery to ourselves, despite rare moments of insight, often granted to us by others who shock us by their observations of who are and what we are like. As for other people, no matter how well we think we know them, they too escape our grasp; they have depths that we cannot reach. If we think of the Church, she seems to be full of surprises for us, some welcome, others quite unwelcome. If we were not open to surprise, we would be closed to grace.



Common Ground - Principles

- 1- We should recognize that no single group or viewpoint in the church has a complete monopoly on the truth.
- 2- We should not envision ourselves or any one part of the church as a saving remnant.
- 3- We should test all proposals for their pastoral realism and potential impact on living individuals as well as for their theological truth.
- 4- We should presume that those with whom we differ are acting in good faith.
- 5- We should put the best possible construction on differing positions, addressing their strongest points rather than seizing upon the most vulnerable aspects in order to discredit them.
- 6- We should be cautious in ascribing motives.

DIALOGUE - What might it achieve?

1. Agreement on substantive issues
2. More effective joint action and collaboration
3. Agreement about procedures for dealing with neuralgic issues
4. Reduced number areas of disagreement about issues
5. Increased number of areas of agreement
6. Better mutual understanding and appreciation
7. Resolved some misunderstandings
8. Better relationships between participants
9. Raised level/degree of involvement in decisions/issues by participants
10. More internally cohesive community.
11. Better witness externally

Can we approach others seeking to appreciate their position and passion, their experience and perspective, their pain and fear, their commitments and their way of reading threats to these commitments?