



# Education for Peace and Interfaith Dialogue Experiences

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## **1. WHY PEACE AND DIALOGUE?**

Our existential task is the inter-subjective “I-you”, our faith communities and our living together sustained and nourished by our religious convictions and hopes. In *No Exit* (1948), Sartre shows how other persons are threats to freedom and human existence. In his well-known expression, “Other people are hell”, he expresses his fear that others have the potential to annihilate our personal freedom and authentic existence. This is the dreadful reality of Apartheid, the Rwanda genocide, the Sharia law crisis in Nigeria, the bloody conflict between Catholics and Protestants in the Netherlands. We are heirs to a long history of mutual contempt among religions and religious denominations, of religious coercion, strife and persecution.

“There will be no peace in the world until there is peace among the religions and there will be no peace among the religions until there is dialogue among the religions (Hans Kung and the Parliament of the World’s Religions).” How to dialogue in order to educate to peace among religions? How can religion assume its real function in the achievement of personal wholeness and social coherence? (Royal Rue, “Religion is Not About God”, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ and London, 2005, p.160)

Shall we understand interfaith dialogue as an educational process to further the causes of peace and harmony, mutual understanding and acceptance, human life and human dignity (Pope John Paul II)? As entering into a “dialogue of life”, even a “dialogue in depth”, with people of different faith communities (statement of Asian Bishop as regard interreligious dialogue)?

What unites us? On what basis do we people of different commitments meet one another? How can we find a common basis for communication and cooperation on matters relevant to our moral and spiritual concern in spite of disagreement and differences?

The search for a common ground to maintain our existence requires a new spirit and a new vision, for “Where there is no vision, people perish”, says the wise of the Book of Proverbs. The words of Martin Luther King remind us “the world is changing and anyone who thinks he can live alone is sleeping through a revolution. We must learn to live together as brothers or will perish together as fools” ((John Okwoeze, Martin Luther King Jr.: His Life and Message (Enugu: Snaap Press Limited, 1995), p.102)).

## **2. VISION- MISSION**

The Scout Group sponsored by the Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue Center of Hsinchu Diocese, proposed to the Interreligious National Scout Committee in Taiwan a set of module activities that envisions to create space and opportunity to engage in “dialogue of life” with the various religions in order to create a better society where people believe, love and serve each other, and discover common ethical concerns and effective paths to action.

We seek to deepen our faith as well as know the faith of other believers; actively encourage dialogue and cooperation among the various religions and Christian dominations; earnestly encourage community service and all activities that enhance the quality of human life, justice and peace, and spiritual development within context of shared religious values and responsibility.

## **3. SCOUT EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES**

### **1- MODULE PROGRAM – CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING**

- a. Type of activity: Lighting the Christmas tree in front of the city government; target group: Catholics, Protestants, and representatives of Buddhism and city government, students from secondary schools, youth groups, and all people of good will participate in the activity to give witness to our faith, together pray for peace, hope, and life. This is expressed through drama, songs, and prayers, followed by the lighting of the Christmas Tree by different religious leaders (Bishop, Pastors, Buddhist spiritual leader, and the mayor of the city) marking the beginning of Christmas season.
- b. Frequency and avenue: It takes place once in a year in December, in the square of the city government.
- c. Expected outcomes: bringing closer Christians from different denominations, developing attitude of openness, tolerance, sharing the same anxieties, social problems and challenges in prayer, fostering collaboration and spirit of brotherhood, worship and fellowship.

## 2- MODULE PROGRAM – ECUMENICAL FELLOWSHIP

- a. Activity and target group: organising worship together with the other Christian churches.
- b. Educational purpose: The aim of the activity is to bring people from different Christian denominations into prayer, brotherhood and sisterhood, to witness to our faith.
- c. Frequency: Once a year (Christian Unity Week)

## 3- MODULE PROGRAM – “EXPLORING FAITH AND BELIEFS”

### ACTIVITY 1 VISITING SACRED PLACES & FAITH COMMUNITIES

- a. Type of activity & target group: Visiting young people and leaders of different faith communities as well as sacred places.
- b. Educational purpose: The “Faith and Belief” program aims to have a greater and comprehensive understanding of the spiritual heritage of other faith communities: beliefs, practices, rituals, ceremonies, festivals, stories, legends, myths, etc. to acknowledge and accept the truth and values we share together.
- c. What you should avoid: judging, criticizing, laughing at people’s beliefs, showing disrespect to sacred places, proselytism, etc.
- d. What you should foster: listening, respect the don’ts of beliefs, tolerance, understanding, and mutual acceptance; discover what is truthful, valuable and noble in other faiths.
- e. Expected outcomes: good relationship with other believers, possibility of joint programs, a better understanding of other faiths, living in peace and harmony.

### ACTIVITY 2: PUBLICATION OF RELIGIOUS LOGBOOK: THE MEANING OF MY LIFE THROUGH RELIGIONS’ WISDOM

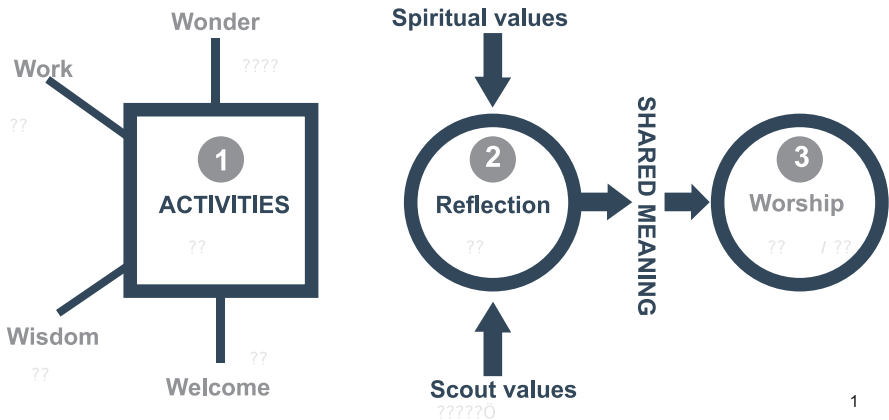
Purpose: We want to educate young people to develop and nurture a spirit and attitudes of openness, tolerance, respect, appreciation, and mutual enrichment between young people of different faith communities.

In so doing, we hope to publish a booklet that contains an introduction or brief presentation of each major religion (Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism), a theme-based compilation of sacred texts taken from different religious traditions, and a proposed method to foster spiritual development.

A competition will be organized among Scouts, students of secondary schools and universities based on compilation of religious texts and PowerPoint presentation of any other religions’ festivals, feasts, rituals, ceremonies... except one’s own.

**ACTIVITY 3: DIALOGUE IN DEPTH THROUGH A PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

## 5W ACTIVITIES



The willingness to work together with Scouts from other faith communities, and the acceptance to reflect on one's own experiences in the light of religious texts borrowed from different spiritual traditions, are efforts that lead to peace and to mutual edification. As Paul said, "I want us to help each other with the faith we have. Your faith will help me, and my faith will help you" (Romans 1:12). The above process of spiritual development, as experienced in World Jamborees and Moots and through a series of activities, can help young people, within the limit of their religious freedom, to appropriate in depth the spiritual intuitions of the other beyond one's own ideas. For a fruitful dialogue, it is necessary that one reaches into the very depth of oneself to the experience of the other who may not be of the same faith.

### 4- MODULE PROGRAM – “YOU & ME” / “LET’S GET TOGETHER...!”

- a. Type of activity: Friendship and fellowship through outdoor activities: picnic, cycling, BB, sightseeing, hiking, swimming,
- b. Target group: young people and young religious leaders from different faith communities: Buddhists, Taoists, Protestants, and Christians
- c. Educational purpose: How can the difference of our faiths make difference in our lives? The activity is intended to create friendship and fellowship among young people of different faith communities;
- d. Alternative activities:
- e. What are you invited to foster: be punctual, listen, pay attention to each other, be sensitive and friendly, show respect, communicate and share, open and make new friends, pay attention to your feelings and emotions...
- f. Activity procedure: a. Follow the educational method proposed with the 5W (see above).

## 5- MODULE PROGRAM – INTERFAITH CEREMONY FOR PEACE

- a. Activity & target group: organising a workshop on Violence and Peace among Religions followed by an interreligious ceremony prayer for peace during the Chinese New Year. The target group will be Christians, Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims, and non-believers as well as the local authority.
- b. Educational purpose: The activity is intended to bring believers from different profession of faiths at the threshold of a new year to pray for peace and harmony, for prosperity and a better future, considering the animal that marks the Chinese calendar. This ceremony will help believers to begin spiritually a new year and strengthen brotherhood spirit between them.
- c. Nature of the activity: Welcome address; drama; songs; dance; prayers and blessings; lighting the Chinese Calendar animal
- d. Venue: The place of this activity will be determined by religious leaders
- e. Frequency: once in a year (Chinese New Year)
- f. Human resources: religious leaders and respective faith communities, local and civil authority.

## 6- MODULE PROGRAM – RELIEF/SOS ASSISTANCE

- a. Activity and target group: Organizing along with other believers from other faith communities some joint humanitarian or social activities – projects, collect of donations, clothing, any other materials - aimed at assisting the destitute, poorest, individuals with urgent and vital needs, the marginalized, the ethnic minorities, victims of typhoons, tsunamis, or earthquakes, or any other natural disaster or calamity.
- b. Intentional purpose of the activity is to show compassion, creating better living conditions for the weak, the poor, the less privileged, and the less fortunate. This activity is also intentionally meant to bring different faith communities to express the beauty of religion as well as of Scout law, in a human person, to express greater solidarity and joint action to create better life and give new hope.
- c. Value to foster: develop sensitivity to others' misfortune, respect to the human dignity in the poor, make sure all donations are used for their intended purpose, spirit of voluntary and sacrifice for the good of others, spirit of cooperation and collaboration within a team.
- d. Process/method: 1. Write a case study of the situation and the needs of the concerned; 2. Contact and share with leaders of different faith communities and seek a joint action to respond to the needs of the concerned; 3. Agree with leaders and experts on a project, strategy and method, human resources, means of responding to the needs of the concerned; 4. set a timetable...

## **MODULE PROGRAM – I-YES CAMP (Youth Encounter Seminar Camp)**

- a. Nature of activities and target group: organizing 3-4 days camping for young Catholics, Protestants, Muslim, Buddhists, Taoists; interreligious, humanitarian, socio-

cultural activities will be organized/organised; organising workshop on some ethical or social issues such as abortion, suicide, broken families, corruption & exploitation, Peace and Religious Violence, The Migrant Workers: Their Lives, Dignity, and Rights to mention but a few, and seeking a common path to action; exploring possibilities of organising community service or joint social projects; creative presentation of experiences or group sharing through drama, songs, poems, pantomime, painting, modern and cultural dance, or musical show related to social issues.

b. Educational purpose: The activity aims to create an opportunity for young people of different faith communities to come together and deepen their faith and share their experiences; to get to know each other, make friends, discover the spiritual heritage of others, share their experiences, and carry common and joint community or social service towards the needy (...).

c. Role of leaders: the leaders will help:

- To show the young people concepts, principles, and point of views that may determine and justify stereotype behavior or attitudes towards the ethical or social issue at the heart of the activity
- To assess the quality of information and knowledge of young people and the need of right information and formation that may lead to a change of concept and attitude - with the assistance of experts.
- To gain spiritual understanding of the topic through sacred texts, taken from different religious traditions
- To find a joint social or humanitarian activity
- To develop communication between people of different faith communities

d. Frequency: once in a year (July-August/summer)

e. Process: songs with body language; talks on the theme or a topic; group sharing/workshop; Taize worship; recreational activities, e.g. hiking, swimming, climbing, cycling, walking, Olympic games, and cultural activities, modern dance ....

f. Partnership & human resources: Speakers of certain topics, animators: singing groups, drama and dancing groups, young people from different parishes and Catholic schools.

g. Partnership: parishes, Diocese Youth Ministry, campus ministry, catholic Scout of Taipei, etc.

## CONCLUSION

World events have reported a plethora of scenes of religious violence and bloody conflicts. We honestly and profoundly disagree in matters of creed and dogma, which lie at the heart of our religious existence. We say “no” to one another in some doctrines essential and sacred to us. But the experience of the above-mentioned program/programme proves that across the chasm, we Scouts can extend our hands to one another. Both communication and separation are necessary. We must preserve our individuality as well as foster care for one another, reverence, understanding, and cooperation. The set of module activities is a way to educate to peace and dialogue among different religions present within Scouting. It makes possible and effective a convergence of some of our commitments, of some of our views, tasks we have in

common, evils we must fight together, goals and responsibility we share, and a predicament afflicting us all (Abraham Joshua Heschel, "No Religion is an Island" in *Christianity Through non-Christian Eyes*, Paul J.Griffith (ed), (Maryknoll, New York Orbis Books, pp.29-39.)) The Scout program helps to implement "The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief." ; to allow all religions to manifest their own identity publicly (respect of religious liberty); to understand religion as a herald of peace and harmony, service and solidarity.

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