

# 10 Tips on Dialogue from Pope Francis

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis calls dialogue “essential” for family life. His guidelines on dialogue are easily applicable to civil society as well.

## CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW THIS ELECTION CYCLE MIGHT BE DIFFERENT IF WE CHALLENGED OURSELVES, CANDIDATES, POLITICAL PARTIES, COMMENTATORS, OURSELVES, AND OTHERS TO FOLLOW POPE FRANCIS’ ADVICE?

1. **Recognize the real “importance” and dignity of the other person.** Recognize others’ right “to think as they do and to be happy.” Pope Francis challenges us to acknowledge the values of the other’s “deepest concerns” and what he or she is trying to say (no. 138).
2. **Try to understand where the other person is coming from:** his or her pain, disappointments, fear, anger, hopes, and dreams (no. 137).
3. **Put yourself in the other’s “shoes”;** try to “peer” into his or her heart. This is the starting point for dialogue (no. 138).
4. **Be ready to “listen patiently and attentively to everything the other person wants to say.”** Dialogue requires the “self-discipline” of waiting until someone is finished speaking before responding. And, it means *truly* listening to what someone else is saying—not planning a comeback before the other person has even finished speaking (no. 137).
5. **“Keep an open mind.”** We need not stick to our own “limited ideas and opinions,” but we must “be prepared to change or expand them.” Our goal is “synthesis” that enriches everyone involved in the dialogue. We don’t seek unity in diversity, Pope Francis says, but rather “reconciled diversity” (no. 139).
6. **Our goal is to advance the common good.** Respect and appreciation for the “other” are necessary prerequisites (no. 139).
7. **Try not to offend, and don’t vent.** We must choose our words carefully, be sensitive to how others feel, and never seek to inflict hurt. We must also avoid a “patronizing” tone, which “only serves to hurt, ridicule, accuse and offend others” (no. 139).
8. **Love everyone.** “Love,” Pope Francis writes, “surmounts even the worst barriers.” When we come from a place of love, we can better understand others (no. 140).
9. **Base positions on beliefs and values,** not on the desire to “win” an argument or be “proved right” (no. 140).
10. **Pray!** True dialogue, Pope Francis reminds us, “can only be the fruit of an interior richness” nourished by our quiet time with God through reading, reflection, prayer, and “openness to the world around us” (no. 141).

These are challenging words from Pope Francis. How might our own families be different if we took his words to heart? Our parishes? Our neighborhoods? Ourselves? Our society? The current election cycle?

Pope Francis’ vision is a vision of joy-filled love. Let’s share it!

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