



# the BridgeDialogues

laity & clergy reimagining the church

A collaborative effort of Voice of the Faithful, FutureChurch, & Association of U.S. Catholic Priests

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This collaboration begins long before the Dialogue session itself, with a commitment from one lay person and one cleric to serve as co-facilitators for the session(s).

## Introducing the BridgeDialogues

Welcome to the BridgeDialogues, a collaborative effort by the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP), FutureChurch (FC), and Voice of the Faithful (VOTF). We designed the dialogues and the accompanying resources to help bridge the gaps that too often prevent lay people and clergy from addressing **together** the problems besetting our Church.

The model we provide asks you to participate equally in sharing your perspectives, to set aside whatever expectations you may hold about “the other” or their thoughts and feelings, and to listen instead with heart and mind to what each other say.

The model also depends on a collaborative environment, one where facilitators establish and maintain the format of the discussion rather than lead it. This collaboration begins long before the Dialogue session itself, with a commitment from one lay person and one cleric to serve as co-facilitators for the session(s).

*The use of co-facilitators is a primary requirement for holding the BridgeDialogues.* If we are to bridge the gaps between ordained and lay in addressing problems, we must model collaboration at all stages. The co-leaders must share the work and share the responsibility for producing any documents or materials needed, setting up the meeting space or making phone calls, and they must work together when facilitating each session.

Included in the current package are this Introduction, a step-by-step model for conducting BridgeDialogues, and a set of resources for conducting dialogues aimed at addressing the problems of clericalism:

- Introducing the BridgeDialogues (this document)
  - The Dialogue Model—guidelines on conducting BridgeDialogue sessions
  - Model 1: two documents—“Introduction to Clericalism” and “Clericalism: Let’s Talk”—for dialogue(s) on understanding the dimensions of clericalism
  - Model 2: two documents—“Clericalism: An Overview” (a video transcript) and “Overview Questions”—for session(s) related to the video presentation
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by Prof. Massimo Faggioli; the video link is included in the Resources document.

- Model 3: “Pope Francis quotes” includes several examples of what Pope Francis has said about clericalism, with related questions after each quote
- Model 4: “Confronting the Systemic Dysfunction of Clericalism,” a lengthy paper addressing how the faithful experience clericalism, with question templates suitable for multiple sessions
- Bibliography & Resources: a list of additional readings and resources for learning more about clericalism and/or developing your own dialogue sessions
- Handout: “Clericalism: Ask Yourself”—questions suitable for use either as a handout after a dialogue session on clericalism, or as questions for additional sessions

## A final thought

Participating in The BridgeDialogues carries an expectation that you will set aside status, rules, cultural attitudes, and any norms that segregate responsibilities within our faith community—at least for the duration of the sessions.

## From the “Letter to the People of God” by Pope Francis: August 18, 2018

It is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a Church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God’s People. Indeed, whenever we have tried to replace, or silence, or ignore, or reduce the People of God to small elites, we end up creating communities, projects, theological approaches, spiritualities and structures without roots, without memory, without faces, without bodies and ultimately, without lives. ... [C]lericalism [is] an approach that ‘not only nullifies the character of Christians, but also tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people.’ Clericalism, whether fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to an excision in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today.

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Voice of the Faithful ([www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org))

FutureChurch ([www.futurechurch.org](http://www.futurechurch.org))

Association of U.S. Catholic Priests ([www.uscatholicpriests.org](http://www.uscatholicpriests.org))

Questions? Write to [debrose@futurechurch.org](mailto:debrose@futurechurch.org)

Take our survey at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TheBridgeDialogues>

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