

SESSION 6

BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE CHURCH

THEME

Building Bridges in the Church

Note to Facilitator: Be aware of who is in your group and consider how building a bridge to alternative perspectives will differ based on who is taking part. For example, biases might stem from other differences besides cultural, ethnic, and racial (for example: geographic location such as urban v. rural, economic status, education level, and occupation, can all influence perspective).

PREPARATION

View the following three-minute video from Pittsburgh University before Session 6:
[Cultural Humility](#)



Please read this short document from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) *Cultural Diversity In The Church, Intercultural Competencies* Module 2:
[Intercultural Competencies Module 2 | USCCB](#)



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Celebrate the rich contributions of our different perspectives
- Understand the implications of diversity and cultural differences
- Realize how much cultural backgrounds influence perspectives
- Assess their cultural awareness and assumptions
- Look for opportunities to build relationships across cultural frontiers in their pastoral leadership
- Be able to use a tool for cultural sensitivity.

SESSION OUTLINE - 120 MINUTES

Overview	5 Minutes
Revisit the Prior Session	10 Minutes
Breakout Theme Conversation	15 Minutes
Scripture Reflection	20 Minutes
Presentation	20 Minutes
Exercise: A Graced Conversation	20 Minutes
Report Outs	5 Minutes
Concluding Commitments	15 Minutes
Final Session Conclusion	10 Minutes

SESSION 6 CONTENT

OVERVIEW

05 min 

- Welcome
- Review the objectives and agenda for the session

REVISIT THE PRIOR SESSION

10 min 

Tell us how you experimented with using one of the seven practices of Adaptive Leadership:

1. Get on the balcony, Distinguish Subject from Object
2. Think politically
3. Orchestrate the conflict
4. Discipline attention to the real issues
5. Give the work back
6. Regulate disequilibrium
7. Infuse the work with meaning.

BREAKOUT THEME CONVERSATION

15 min 

Think of when you crossed a cultural barrier. It could be in a parish, work, school, neighborhood, family, or social setting. In your breakout group, start with one minute of silence and consider the following questions. After the silence, take turns describing your experience (about three minutes each).

1. How did you feel before, during, and after the experience?
2. What graces did you experience?
3. What challenges did you experience?

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

20 min 

The Syrophenician Woman's Faith: Mark 7:24-29

From that place he went off to the district of Tyre. He entered a house and wanted no one to know about it, but he could not escape notice. Soon a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard

about him. She came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth, and she begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, “Let the children be fed first. For it is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.” She replied and said to him, “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s scraps.” Then he said to her, “For saying this, you may go. The demon has gone out of your daughter.”

LARGE GROUP REFLECTION QUESTION

What are the cultural barriers that Jesus is crossing in this encounter?

BREAKOUT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Jesus tested her faith, how did the Syrophoenician woman react?
2. What does this passage teach about Jesus’ mission?
3. What does this teach us about how the Church is intended to be?



Source: [Intercultural Competencies Module 2 | USCCB](#)



WHAT IS CULTURE?

1. *Cultures have ideas and ways of expressing them.* Cultures have beliefs about God, themselves, and others. Cultures carry values that shape their ways of living and interacting with others. Cultures have a language that conveys their ideas, feelings, and ways of living.
2. *Cultures have behaviors.* Cultures have rules about what is proper and improper behavior. Roles—for example, within the family—have distinctive features. Cultures have ways of celebrating and extending hospitality.
3. *Cultures have material dimensions.* Cultures have material, outward signs that express and reflect their ideas and beliefs. Cultures have special foods (what is eaten every day and on special occasions). Among other things, cultures also have unique modes of dressing and furnishing their homes.

WHAT IS CULTURAL HUMILITY?

According to diversity expert Michael Wheeler, *Cultural humility* means entering a relationship with another person with the intention of honoring their beliefs, customs, and values. It is an ongoing process of self-exploration, self-critique, and willingness to learn from others.¹



Key attributes of cultural humility:

- openness
- self-reflection and awareness
- lifelong learning
- institutional accountability
- empathy and compassion
- to be “other-oriented”
- acknowledging power imbalances and balancing power imbalances

1-Wheeler, Michael. “[Cultural Competence and Cultural Humility: A Literature Review for Understanding and Action](#)”

WHAT IS INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE?

Intercultural competence is communicating, relating, and working across cultural boundaries. It involves developing capacity in *knowledge*, *skills*, and *attitudes*. If you are a member of a culture other than the prevailing one, you have already learned a considerable amount about intercultural communication because you have had to survive in the prevailing culture. To gain intercultural competence, prevailing-culture people may have to learn to think in cultural categories before they can exercise greater competency in moving across cultures.

Knowledge involves the following:

- Knowledge of more than one perspective on things
- Knowledge of different interpretations of the same cultural reality
- Knowledge of general dynamics of intercultural communication
- Knowledge of more than one's first language

Skills entail the following:

- Ability to empathize
- Ability to tolerate ambiguity
- Ability to adapt communication and behavior

Attitudes include the following:

- Openness to others and other cultures
- Wanting to learn and engage different cultures
- Understanding intercultural interaction as a way of life, not a problem to be solved
- Mindfulness

ADDITIONAL READING:

Guevarra, Mark (2021) "[Toward a Synodal Parish: Practical Methods for Fostering Synodality](#)," New Horizons: Vol. 5 : Iss. 2, Article 10.



EXERCISE: A GRACED CONVERSATION

20 min



Take **5 min** of individual reflection and **15 min** in breakout groups.

For your individual reflection, consider someone with a different perspective than you do (faith, race, culture, gender, politics, etc.). Imagine having a conversation to get to know the person better and to find points of encounter and commonality.

Consider your answers to the following questions for discussion in your breakout group.

1. What can I learn from this person? As a child of God, he or she is my sister or brother, not a challenge to overcome but rather a collaborator in the search for common ground.
2. What am I hoping for in this dialogue? What questions can I ask that will help me understand their beliefs, customs, values, and perspectives better?
3. What can I bring to the conversation? How might my values help me be open to finding common ground and commitments?

REPORT OUTS

05 min



Share a salient point from each breakout group that considers the ways this type of reflection could help diverse communities walk together in the Church.

CONCLUDING COMMITMENTS

15 min



COMMITMENTS FOR SESSION SIX:

What is one way you can practice cultural humility in your life situation?

COMMITMENTS FOR CONTINUING THE JOURNEY:

Thinking about what's next in your synodal journey, is there a specific topic you want to pursue further? This could be an individual commitment, or a commitment that group members could make to continue the journey together?

- Deep Listening
- Spiritual Conversations
- Overcoming Biases

- Inclusive Decision-making
- Adaptive Leadership
- Intercultural Bridges

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. What will I do differently as a result of the experience of synodal leadership?
2. Are there any policies, procedures, or structures that could change to accommodate greater synodality?
3. How can I communicate synodal leadership methods to the people I work with?
4. What results do I expect to occur from increased synodality in my life or ministry?

FINAL SESSION CONCLUSION



As we come to the end of our course, take some time to reflect on your experience. Please share your evaluation of the sessions (content and facilitation) and the overall experience of the course.

THE END OF
SESSION 6