

## Sample Dialogue Facilitator Script: Speaking Up for Human Life and Dignity

*(Assumes groups of 6, with dialogue beginning at 6:30 PM)*

### 6:35 PM EDT - Introduce the dialogue (4 mins)

Welcome to our civil dialogue. The **purpose** of today's dialogue is to create a space for each of you to reflect on and make meaning of your experiences, values, and complexities related to the Catholic Social Teaching and to hear from your peers about their experiences.

First, we will define some of the terms being used in our conversation today:

**Define Relevant Topics/Terms:** Today, we will be discussing the sanctity of human life. The Catholic Church teaches that each person is created in the image and likeness of God. When we speak about the dignity, or sanctity, of the human person, we are saying that each person we encounter is loved by God and deserving of all human rights granted by our society. Our faith teaches that we should support every human person and create a society where each person can thrive. As a Church, we advocate for life and dignity from conception until natural death, and at every stage in between. In our conversation today, we will discuss our own *personal experience* with these issues. You may connect these questions to any topic of human life and dignity, whether it is care for the poor and vulnerable, defense of the unborn, support for the elderly members of our community, or any other social or personal issue.

The larger purpose of civil dialogue is to foster mutual understanding, establish trust among participants with different experiences, identities and beliefs, and to build community. The purpose is **NOT** to persuade others, solve each other's problems, or find points of agreement, but to share, listen, and try to understand the experience of people in our community.

**(Briefly introduce yourself as a facilitator)**

### **6:36 PM EDT - Re-Introduce the communication agreements**

To help your conversation run smoothly, we will use communication agreements. These are posted in the front of the room, and I will now read them aloud.

- You can always respond to a question by saying, “Pass” or “pass for now” if you are not willing or ready to respond.
- Please allow others to finish their speaking and avoid interrupting.
- Speak in ways that promote connecting and learning.
- Respect all time boundaries. I will indicate when you are running out of time to finish your response, so that we have sufficient time to move on to the next person.
- Be sure to share airtime. I may ask you to “Move up” or “move back” to share airtime.
- Check out your own assumptions by asking questions during the appropriate time.
- Speak for yourself and not on behalf of others.
- Maintain confidentiality. Take the learning, but not others’ stories or names.
- Please attend to cell phones and technology in ways that allow you and others to be as present as possible.

Does anyone have any questions about these agreements?

Please raise your hand/thumbs up/nod your head if you agree to adhere to these agreements for today’s dialogue. This also gives me permission to step in and help the group stick to those agreements if need be.

### **6:37 PM EDT - Explain how the conversation will function**

Our conversation will have four parts: 1) a connecting question to help you introduce yourselves, 2), an opening dialogue question related to the purpose of our dialogue, 3), an interactive portion where you’ll be able to ask each other questions and, finally, a closing question.

We will use a “go-round” structure where I ask a dialogue question and then give you time to silently reflect on your answer. Please utilize those moments to write down your thoughts. After reflecting, each of you will have 1 minute to answer the connecting question and up to 2 minutes to answer the opening dialogue question. I will keep track of time for you.

Please stick to the time limits to make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate fully. Additionally, we will take a breath between speakers to acknowledge what has been said and prepare for the next person to begin speaking.

Lastly, I will not participate in the dialogue. My role as a facilitator is to hold the space for dialogue by guiding the conversation, holding the group accountable to the communication agreements and making sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate. I also want to mention that I am using a facilitator script for a couple of reasons: to keep us on track in terms of time and to ensure the integrity of the questions that have been carefully designed.

Are there any questions before we begin?

### **6:39 PM EDT - Connecting Question (8 mins)**

At this time, we’ll do a round of introductions but in a slightly different way than you may be used to introducing yourself. I’ll share a connecting question, then give you a full minute to reflect on your response, then we’ll begin the go-round.

**Tell us your name and one new thing you learned from the catechetical teaching, and one thing you want to learn more about.**

*(Repeat the question; then give people one minute to reflect.)*

*After 1 minute...*

You will each have up to 1 minute to respond. I will keep time and signal you when 1 minute has passed. Please, then, finish up your statement, if necessary, not your paragraph. Remember that you have the option to pass or pass for now. Also, I'll remind you to take a breath between speakers.

Would you be willing to start us off, \_\_\_\_\_? (Set up queue of speakers - list off next three speakers)

*After everyone has gone...*

Now that you've all had a chance to introduce yourselves, we'll move on to the opening dialogue question. In this question, I'm inviting you to share a story about an experience you've had.

**6:47 PM EDT - Opening Dialogue Question (13 mins)**

**Share a story about an experience from your life that describes how you came to understand the sanctity (or value) of human life? What was the moment that impacted your own perspective on the sanctity (or value) of human life?**

*(Repeat the question; then give people two minutes to reflect.)*

*After 2 minutes...*

During the go-round, feel free to write down any questions you have for each other. After everyone answers the opening dialogue question, you will have an opportunity to ask questions of each other in the next portion of the dialogue. Please hold your questions until this time.

You will each have up to 2 minutes to respond. I will keep time and signal you when 2 minutes have passed. Please, then, finish up your statement, if necessary, not your paragraph. Remember

that you have the option to pass or pass for now. Also, I'll remind you to take a breath between speakers.

Would you be willing to start us off, \_\_\_\_\_?

*After everyone has gone...*

Before we go into the next section which is more open and free form, take a moment to write down any questions you have for one another based on what's been said in the dialogue so far. I will give you about 30 seconds.

*Pause for about 30 seconds...*

### **7:00 PM EDT - QUESTIONS OF GENUINE CURIOSITY** (9 minutes)

Now that we've had an opportunity to hear from everyone, this is the time to deepen your understanding of each other and learn more from one another to make connections between what you heard and what you are curious about. This portion of the dialogue will have less structure and will be more conversational. It will not follow a go-round structure. During this time, we hope that everyone will have a chance to either ask OR answer a question of genuine interest. It is not mandatory to keep it in the form of a question, but leading with that curiosity is the best path to better understanding and we encourage you to try it.

When you ask each other questions, we invite you to be intentional about your question – to ask questions that might make connections between what others have said, or to understand something someone said in new ways. We've all had experiences being asked questions that feel like statements, like judgment, or like thinly veiled advice – but we've also had experiences being asked questions where we feel invited to share more, to think more deeply, or to see things in new ways. There is no perfect way to ask a question – but we invite you to lean into the questions that feel inviting and genuine.

Finally, as a reminder, all of the communication agreements are still in effect during this session, including the “pass” rule. So, if you’re asked a question you don’t feel equipped to respond to, or wish to not respond to, you don’t have to – and you don’t have to explain why. Try to make space for everybody to be heard.

You will have until about **7:09 PM EDT** and I will let you know when you have about 2 minutes left. Who would like to start us off?

**Is this something someone said that you are curious about and would like to better understand?**

*Remember to track who has asked and who has answered so that everyone has an opportunity to participate*

**At 7:07 PM EDT** - We have about 2 minutes left, enough time for a final question or comment.

**At 7:09 PM EDT**- There’s never a perfect time to end this section, but we want to be respectful of the time that you have committed to be here and so we’re going to move to our closing.

**7:09PM EDT - CLOSING (in 30 seconds)** (4 mins)

The purpose of this section is to bring your dialogue to a conclusion. You will have up to 30 seconds to respond to the following question in a go-round structure:

**What is one thing you’re still pondering from today’s dialogue?**

*(Repeat question and give people a 30 seconds to think)*

Would you like to start us off? Remember, we're asking you to respond in 30 seconds.

**7:13PM EDT - CONFIDENTIALITY REVIEW AND WRAP UP (2 mins)**

We have one final piece of business and that is to review the confidentiality agreement that you made at the beginning of this dialogue. You have all agreed to:

- Maintain confidentiality. Take the learning, but not others' stories.

Does everyone feel comfortable with this level of confidentiality?

At this time, we will bring the dialogue to a formal close but I hope the conversation itself and the connections you've made remain with you.

[Facilitator can offer an appropriate expression of gratitude]