



# Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments

*Bradford E. Hinze*

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## **Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments**

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One of the principal buzzwords of the Second Vatican Council (1963-65), along with collegiality, co-responsibility, full participation, and aggiornamento, was dialogue. This is a history of how the practices of dialogue have actually worked or failed to work at every level of the church over the past forty years. Beginning at the most basic level, that of the parish, the book moves up the ecclesiastical ladder from parish councils, to diocesan synods, to the (Roman) synod of bishops. The book moves laterally as well to include ecumenical and interreligious dialogues. A chapter is devoted to the fractious Call to Action Conference, initiated by the U.S. bishops in 1976; another to the new inclusive style of drafting pastoral letters by the U.S. bishops - "The Challenge of Peace" (1983), "Economic Justice for All" (1986), and the never approved pastoral on women ("Partners in the Mystery of Redemption"). A further chapter is devoted to Cardinal Bernardin's Catholic Common Ground Initiative, which is still going on, though it was initially publicly attacked by four U.S. cardinals. Finally, there is a chapter on what was perhaps the most radical and far-reaching exercise of dialogue of all, namely, the dialogical and democratic processes by which women religious revised their constitutions. This is a cautionary tale, filled with thick description of advances and retreats. In a curious way, the book is a sequel to the multi-volume "History of the Second Vatican Council", edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak. If those volumes tell us what transpired at the council, Hinze's volume tells us what happened when the council fathers went home and all the good ideas of the council were either put into effect or left to gather dust in the dead-letter bin. Vatican Council II is an ongoing experiment, and "Practices of Dialogue" is a series of reports from the labs.

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