

# BE A LEADER For Life-Enhancing Change



*We believe that when we search for agreement around shared values of justice and compassion, we help create solutions to difficult social and political problems. - South Dakota Faith and Public Life Website*

## Justice Is Our Work!

The Aberdeen Presentation Sisters willingly go forth to any part of the world to work for justice, alleviate oppression and promote human dignity, especially among the poor. This is done in a spirit of love and joy.

Often times during election season, it is natural to find oneself avoiding certain conversations in social circles. Conflict is so often viewed as negative, but really can be a positive thing if the discussion and respect of the other person is present.

Even when we disagree, we want to remember to value the relationship. All faiths call us to respect one another, no matter how much we disagree. Every person is made in the image of God and is loved into being by God.

The thought, "I am right so therefore you are wrong," is dualistic thinking and the root of countless arguments. Violence often stems from this rationale. So how do we discipline ourselves and share with others of varying perspectives that there can be a both/and instead of an either/or?

As Sisters, we call each other to the practice of Contemplative Dialogue. This includes the following points:

- **Listen deeply.** Truly be there to hear what the other person has to say. Do not judge. Set aside other distractions. Do not focus on your rebuttal. Be intent to understand. Listen with an open mind.
- **Refrain from impulsive speech and action.** It is human to have a "reaction" when we hear something that passionately disagrees with our core. To pause

and ponder before speaking or reacting can make a remarkable difference in the outcome of the conversation.

- **Practice civility with mutual respect.** Treat others how you would like to be treated. Give others the benefit of the doubt.

Contemplative Dialogue is a compassionate, shared process. It sets aside bias and is done with respect of the other person. It allows for quiet periods together to listen for the new to emerge and create a common ground.

- **Sit quietly together to let the new emerge.** If we believe that God/Spirit is working in each person then we honor them, respect them and search for the common ground with them. This implies surrender to God and a giving over, trusting that God will indeed lead. Relinquishing my agenda to see what can emerge by our Contemplative Dialogue together, which neither could have realized alone.

**Challenge Questions:** What steps can you take to practice Contemplative Dialogue with someone of a different persuasion this political season? How might deeper listening be enhanced in your family or workplace?



**Sister Janice Klein** is President of the Presentation Sisters and a lifelong educator. She is a learner of being a contemplative in action and a leader in finding thoughtful ways to dialogue difficult matters.

For more information, please visit: [www.sdfaithinpubliclife.org](http://www.sdfaithinpubliclife.org) or [www.contemplativedialogue.org](http://www.contemplativedialogue.org)



Sisters of the Presentation  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary

*In Joyful Service*

**Through dialogue our voice becomes clearer.  
United we are stronger. Justice flourishes.**

Please visit: [www.presentationisters.org](http://www.presentationisters.org) to learn how you can become a partner for justice.