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REA Annual Meeting, Oct. 31 – Nov. 3, 2019

Cooperative Coexistence for Co-creation

Abstract: The word cooperation is so commonly used that it has lost its meaning and is less practiced. The author in this research paper explores the theological, social, and historical ways of cooperation for coexistence. The research also highlights the basic realities that bring in cooperation and helps human beings to coexist. The paper also focuses on the challenges that arise from coexistence and how they impact the co-creation. Using this intensive research, the author proposes ways in which the societies can not only coexist; but this cooperation leads to co-creation bringing about new life and vitality. This paper provides insights from interviews and classical findings from everyday life which add richness and reality. It argues with the real facts that cooperative coexistence eventually leads to co-creation which is germane. The paper also augments the scope for Religious Educators to develop new pedagogical practices. It concludes by identifying areas which provide the vast scope for future research.

Introduction:

In the *busy-ness* of life it is important to pause and look into our neighbor's eyes, as we listen deeply instead of just a "how are you?" This phrase has become more of a greeting rather than its real meaning of genuine inquisitiveness of a neighbor's well-being. People seldom pause to listen after this question is asked. The busyness of life has created a false ego. There is a need for the movement from the individualistic consumer ego to the communal ecosystem. The need for the community is derived from the basic human drive to live in communion with each other.

Coexistence means the fact of living together at the same time or in the same place. The broader definition of coexistence itself means that there are two separate entities and yet they live together either in the same place or at the same time. There is an intrinsic sense of belonging which keeps them together in the same place. This coexistence opens up possible avenues to cooperation.

Cooperation as it simply means operating together towards a common objective. The Greek word for cooperation means synergy, collaboration, etc... The word *cooperation* goes beyond the group dynamics involved in groups or teams. In the everyday lives cooperation is silent like an unspoken word and yet is evident in the day to day operations. There is a belief in each other which is developed in the process as there is a need for operating towards a common objective. This synergy leads to becoming a new cohort as it co-creates a new space, or a product.

Co-creation is an act of creating something new by working together as a team. This is evident result of coexisting together as a community and synergistically operating together. The community which coexists eventually ends up *co-creating* as they cooperate in their activities. Co-creation is not an end result of an activity. It is an ongoing process in the life of the individual and the community. This activity is evident through the fruits that it yields for the common good. There are several ways that we can see life through the acts of co-creation.

On the one hand, The Wall Street Journal reported about the suicide bomber on Easter attacks as recent as April 21, 2019 at St. Sebastian's Church in Sri Lanka. The bomber was trained in Syria with Islamic State. This recent killing with a human suicide bomber is an example of hatred, and rationalization of values, and many other factors. This is preceded by a massacre at Christchurch, New Zealand on March 18, 2019. In this incident 50 adults and children were killed at two mosques. There are also similar shootings at two synagogues in the US. The New York Times reported on October 27, 2018 about the deadliest anti-Semitic shooting at the Tree Of Life Congregation Synagogue in the United States in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was followed by the most recent Passover attack at a Synagogue in Poway, California on April 27, 2019. These classical examples depict that the whole race of human beings was attacked irrespective of religion, gender, age, culture, etc... These suggest one thing in common, no matter whether it is an organized attack or a random expression of hate, this is an irreversible act leading to death, trauma, hatred, fear, divisions in society, and the list goes on. What next?

On the other hand, following these deadly events, we were having interfaith discussions at the Islamic Center of Richmond about the recent happenings worldwide. The leaders of various religious groups and denominations (Catholics, Muslims, Jews, Baptists and other faiths from the community) met to grapple with real life issues and wrestle to understand how we all can coexist in these *divided societies*. The discussions that occurred at the Inter faith dialogue was an excellent example of how a Rabbi, Bishop, Pastor, Imam, and the community were able to talk openly of how they feel about the recent happenings. There was a safe space created to talk and express the feelings of the larger community. These places are referred to as safe because each individual opinion was valued and they could be their real self. Hence these spaces can also be referred to as *brave spaces*. The recent interfaith meeting at the Islamic center of Richmond gave us an open and honest conversational approach to the divisions in our societies. The meeting ended with what would be the next most faithful steps amidst these differences. How do we build a *social capital*?¹

In today's divided society, it is considered that these people who kill others (militants/terrorists) are from the poorest of the poor and do not have any means to survive. They were recruited to perform these tasks as their families were paid and supported. On the other hand, the very educated, elite, and middle class to upper middle class, youth/younger generation are taking up these tasks of carrying out the horrific slaughter of humankind. They are blinded to the fact that they are killing their own neighbors – the innocent human race. Intolerance to our own neighborhood, which is a diverse society today, is adding complexity to the coexistence. There is increase in knowledge and improved communication in the 21st century. Can we refer to those performing these cruel acts of merciless killing as *Educated Illiterates*?

What is the real problem of our society? How can we address the needs of our neighbors? What are the sacrifices that we need to make as a community? When do we realize the value of this precious life? Where can we find hope for these lives? What can we do to live in peace and unity?

¹ Sacks, Jonathan *The Dignity of Difference: How to avoid the clash of civilization* (New York, NY: CONTINUUM, 2005) pg. 148

Methodology: The methodology for this paper includes but is not limited to - Historical research, Insights from different faith traditions, Personal interviews from heterogeneous individuals, Bibliographical resources, Faith journals, Published articles, etc... These terms cooperative, coexistence, and co-creation do not have to occur in linear fashion for them to be evident. They are independent of each other and can occur randomly at any stage of life. Some of the interviews and case studies used for this research will reveal more about how the terms *cooperative*, *coexistence*, and *co-creation* are germane.

Historically human beings existed as a part of their communities and as groups of people. They lived together as they encountered the outside forces of nature and protected their own community. Communal living was a way of life and a means of survival. They also depended on each other for their living. Certain communities specialized in specific trades and they helped each other with their specialization, apart from all the differences and struggles.

What does it cost to appreciate the differences and yet live in harmony as being *Imago Dei*- valuable lives created in the Image of God? Does it cost more than the lives killed in all such incidences throughout history to just let go of our own *ego*.

It is interesting to see that we are created in the same physical bodies and species as our *homo-sapien* neighbors and yet ironically we often ignore our neighbors. Moreover the neighborly love is not evident in our society at this time. Especially in southern context in the United States, there is a deeper sense of *slavery* still persisting in the hearts of people. Though we “coexist” in the same society, there is seldom a sense of cooperation. Hence when the things of the past keep coming up, it suggests that there is no co-creation or healing and the society is still struggling with the same problems that existed decades ago.

In fact the Pew Research Center’s report as recent as April 2019 says that “most black adults have negative views about America’s racial progress.”² The moments of cooperation need to be a part of our everyday lives rather than isolated events. They are not acts of performance which are done occasionally. How can we as religious educators, educate the *educated illiterates*? Where do we see the value in our society as we educate? What are the pedagogical practices that we are willing to adopt in our teaching methodologies that would impact the present and the future generations?

Case Studies: We will try to understand the role of the terms cooperation, coexistence, and co-creation, by examining several interviews and case studies. This case study is to critically understand the relativity between coexistence and cooperation, and in the process whether there is a co-creation.

One of the interviews is with NS who is a professor. He is a dynamic personality and a great scholar. He is one of the earliest African Americans to have received his Doctor of Philosophy from Harvard University. He is very well respected in the academic circles. One thing is evident that more than half of the professors who teach at this seminary have been his students at some point in time. NS is an eminent personality and has taught at a seminary since many decades. As I witnessed the story of NS, he says it has been a hard journey. He says with classic examples of how he has been treated by the people because of his “*Black-ness*.” Moreover it is not stories from the past; he cites evidences from the present day context.

² Pew Research Center: Social and Demographic Trends (April 9, 2019)

NS is an African-American, refers to himself as a *black* man. He resides in the student residence dormitory of a *white* seminary. Both he and others (his neighbors) are under the impression that he is a tough man to deal with. NS goes on morning walk to the nearby track. One day NS was on his routine morning walk, and was intercepted by security personnel of a neighboring school and was asked not to tread that path. To his amazement, he was told that it was a private road and it's a "no trespassing" area. However there were no signs stating that it was a private property. Later there was confrontation and it was a bitter experience for NS. He felt threatened and had many sleepless nights because of the way he was treated. Hence NS decided to meet with the authorities' of that neighboring school to discuss about this issue. However he was disregarded and was unable to get an appointment with any of them. Meanwhile this was brought to the notice of the authorities of the *white* seminary by some other *white* folks who intercepted him. The leadership of the *white* seminary called NS to discuss the matter. Looking at the way the issue was dealt, NS relates this incident to the days of slavery when a black man was not spoken to directly. He felt that he was treated the same way. Moreover he was called by another person not related to the one who intercepted. NS says this was the way the slaves were treated. On the one hand the neighboring school authorities were not willing to talk to NS and on the other hand they were conveying a message to him through other sources. (According to NS it is like the slave master conveying the message to his slaves.) Though it seems that there is coexistence, there is no cooperation, integration, and reconciliation.

Recently there was a change in the management of the neighboring school. Hence the new management wanted to reconcile with NS. There was a desire to cooperate and co-create the relationship. To his amazement, NS was invited to meet with the neighboring school authorities and they were also *white* folks but had a different approach. NS felt that this was a radical approach to the previous encounter that he had. NS also explained that the new management of the neighboring school had apologized about the previous hostile experiences and were willing to work with NS and create a holistic renewed relationship. The desire for cooperation had led to co-creation.

The new management of the neighboring school took a courageous step towards reconciliation after analyzing the facts. On the one hand they were willing to risk the consequences of the *white-black* encounter. On the other hand there was openness and acceptance to the reality and the hurt caused by their institution. They were willing to cooperate in the given situation and this led to the co-creation of a completely new and renewed relationship with NS. This also changed the perspective of both the parties involved in this encounter. The *white*-ness did not bother the *black* personality of NS any longer. There was acceptance from both of them. There is a creation of a brave space where they could meet and talk about things both from the past and of the present. There was a creation of a new life, new way of living, living at peace with each other, and recovery of the broken relationships.

This experience ties back to the Pew Research results which states that most black adults have negative views about Americas' racial progress. When I analyze this from the eyes of a researcher, on the one hand this research is based on a larger research sample. Hence it may vary when there are personal interviews done with individuals. And on the other hand these views of the black adults are impacted with each individual encounter of racial reconciliation as we have seen in this case study.

We will look at another case study to understand the relativity of the *cooperative coexistence for co-creation*. MEA is an international *refugee* who has been living in the US from April 2014. HM has had varied and hard experiences in these past couple of years. MEA says that these experiences have shaped his views and ideas of how he views his neighborhood. There had been a huge culture shock for this family since they are from the Middle Eastern country. They have been coexisting in these divided societies trying to make meaning of life. The family is learning the language, culture, and neighborhood. They expressed that they had mixed experiences about the incidences in the past few years. The government has isolated them when it came to the judicial systems and the injustice toward them is evident.

On the one hand they were treated as those who do not belong because of their nationality. On the other hand a different department from the same government has offered them the Social Security benefits as persons of low/no income. Since they are supported by these programs of the government, they are grateful for these benefits of food and basic needs. It is a different approach by two different entities of the same government.

On the one hand, they faced challenges and persecution by the people of their own community (The people who speak their language and those who are from their own country) on multiple occasions. There is a mistrust created by the people whom they had thought their own. On the other hand the MEA family has encountered the *philoxenia* (love of/toward a stranger) from their neighbors though they don't speak the same language and are from different cultures. In the process they say that the neighborhood has been very kind and helpful to them. The family has seen many neighbors looking into their eyes when they needed help.

Post 9/11 it is evident how people from certain religious community and immigrants are treated in the US. The MEA family says that it does not hold true in their context, because though they are refugees, they are taken care of well and are shown abundant love from their neighbors. There is a unique *environment* and a support system created around them.

A Vietnam veteran commented about the real life experiences when they were deployed. The veteran says, "When we look into one's eyes and when we are face to face with another human it is hard to kill or harm the other person. On the other hand when we know where the target is, we cannot see the humans there, and we war against the *enemy*. Hence it is comparatively easier to shoot the target." The veteran also mentioned that age also matters. Young blood is easily motivated against the so-called *enemy*, in his opinion. The veteran goes on to say that, it is hard to realize that it takes a war to make friends. These wars resulted in friendship with those nations; he questions, "can we not make friends without war?"

We can except miracles from dialogue because, dialogue brings us face to face with truth in a relationship of love. As each person speaks and responds honestly to the other, each moves to the other and includes them. To really see another is to see the *other*, and to really love another is to love the *other*. The purpose of dialogue is to restore relationships and to bring about transformation. This restoration brings about encounters that add meaning to life. In the process of the dialogue the humanity is restored, and there is reunification.³

³ Howe, Reuel L. *The Miracle of Dialogue* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1964) pp. 64-106

When we begin to see things, there is a *change*. Change in our attitude, change in perception, change on our surroundings, because we see things clearly and are intentional. Before all this there is already an inner change which allows the individual to see things differently. There is a new learning about the facts, which uncovers the previous perceptions. There is an unlearning of earlier ways giving way to new learning methodologies. The individual and in turn the community is more open to the radical transformation. There is a evident change in the whole ecosystem.

It is evident from these case studies, that when we face reality things look different. Each encounter and every situation is unique. We encounter real life, and real people that exist in our midst, our outlook towards life changes. Our perceptions about certain preconceived ideas take a new shape. There is reality unearthed when research is done to understand each individual's context. It helps the researcher to get a better grasp of the study.

Humans are surrounded by nature which encompasses everything around us. I would like to delve deeper into three classical examples of the ecosystems right around us: the *flora and fauna*, the *environment*, and the *human beings*. These ecosystems exist right within and around us, and they have a vast a varied ways of cooperation in which they coexist. What are some of the things that we see in this *neighborhood* right around us? We live in this environmental ecosystem with the need for each other. Hence there is cooperation as each individual unit supports the other as they coexist in this vast ecosystem. There is a vast number of species that we are yet to discover. Research suggests that more than 85 % of the species are yet to be discovered. This means that there is a majority of life that exists right around us. Some are seen because of their visible structures, and most of them remain unseen. Whether we see them with our naked eyes or not, they still exist in our ecosystem. It takes effort and understanding to realize and recognize their presence which is very important for the ecosystem to function.

The flora and fauna and all the earth's creatures live in a dynamic relationship with each other. The recent scientific discoveries have revealed the mutual relationship and cooperation between these species.⁴ By virtue of being in the same habitat, they begin to leverage the relationships. There is a symbiotic activity which is beneficial as they coexist. They create conditions that are suitable for their living and for their coexistence. The Amazon rainforest is home to over 400 billion trees from 16,000 different species. These different species exist only in dependence to each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.

During my recent visit to Kenya, I had an opportunity to study about the *meru oak* tree found in eastern Africa, which is unique to this part of the world. It is known for its longevity. This kind of oak is a unique species which is found only in Kenya. The meru oak tree harbors more than 35,000 species of microorganisms. They naturally grow on this oak tree and are often ignored. These species are not taken into consideration when the tree is cut for many reasons and its multiple uses. As the *meru oak* tree is a threatened species and is growing extinct, and does not grow in any other part of the world, even these 35,000+ species which dwell on this tree are growing extinct.

⁴ Delio, Warner, Wood *Care for Creation: a Franciscan spirituality of the earth* (Cincinnati, OH: At. Anthony Messenger Press, 2008) Pg. 67

What are some of the ways that these can be preserved to maintain the richness in the ecosystem? How many such unseen species are ignored by human beings? Does this awareness help to understand the ecosystem in a much larger perspective?

While we work to conserve the natural habitat, it is important to understand how we function together in this natural environment. We are dependent on trees like *meru oak* and many other flora surrounding us. They help us by inhaling the carbon dioxide that we exhale. They also give us the oxygen that we need to exist. There is a symbiotic relationship which is often ignored and taken for granted. A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion, and concern for our fellow human beings.⁵

Every human being is unique too. Humans inhabit the earth and there is a need to respond to the nature by reconnecting to it. These humans are named as *Homo Sapiens*, which means that they are wise relational beings. Humans participate actively in this nature and the environment that surrounds them. Nature is interconnected with human life. Every species has a multiple role to play to keep the ecosystem functioning.

A human being stands to the *polis* (referred to as community) as a part of a whole, in a way analogous ...to that in which a hand or a foot stands to the body of which it is a part ...detach a hand from its body; it then lacks both the specific function and the separate capacity of hand; it is no longer in the same sense a hand...What is it that a human being is deprived of, if radically separated from the life of a *polis*?...law and justice which only the *polis* affords...Separated from the *polis*, what could have been a human being becomes a wild animal.⁶

The author intends to derive the fact that there is no sense of moral ideas without the community. Rather, moral vision is the product of the communal experience itself. Human body consists of many cells and organs and yet operates as one body. One of the facts from scientific research is that there are trillions of cells in human body. And yet they function together as one body. How do these many members function on their own and yet are a part of a whole? The many individual organs within the body, function within themselves, and yet coordinate together for the whole body to operate. There is a communal experience within itself which helps in coordinating its operations. This is not a onetime work, and rather it is an ongoing process as long as the body exists. It also shows a sense of belongingness. The body parts are strategically placed to co-operate. They cannot exist one without the other. They also operate within their boundaries; which means there are both permeable and semi-permeable membranes to regulate their movement from one area to the other. One organ cannot encroach into another area of the body. Each has to operate within its own limitations. Yet there is a common thread (referred to as blood) which connects all these organs to function simultaneously. This is a classical example of many members dwelling in unity, recognizing and honoring their differences, and agreeing with one another as they operate.

⁵ Francis, Pope *LAUDATO SI': On Care For Our Common Home* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2015) pg. 63

⁶ MacIntyre, Alasdair *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) pp. 98-99

Indeed the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as God chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and out less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.⁷ *I Corinthians 12:14-26 –NRSV*

The quoted reference is used to describe the image of the Church in its original context. However, this explains how the human body in itself is a complex creation. There is a trust within these members as they operate. They operate in unity and synchronize their activities. While each has its own function and purpose, they cooperate together to create life in the body. The unity brings them together, and helps to dwell together in the same body. This also helps each member to recover something of their true selves. We can understand God as the creator of all people made in God’s image, even though in all their diversity. He is still one of the foremost proponents of a dialogical theology.- Wesley Ariarajah (WCC).

As I grapple to understand how the different organs exist within the same body, at the same time I wonder how each of these cells that neither resemble each other, nor function the same way and yet coexist within the same body. These are specialized organs that perform a specific function and yet augment the functioning of the body. If there is no cooperation between the vital organs, it leads to end organ damage – multiple organ failure – leading to death. It is difficult to dwell in unity and realize the human dignity in those whose language is not mine, those who look different, whose skin tone is of another color, who believe in other than what I believe in, whose truth is not my truth.⁸

The flora and fauna are unique and diverse. The human body is also gives a fair glimpse of the unity that dwells right within us. The environment too expresses itself as we understand how they coexist in divided surroundings. What can we learn implicitly and explicitly from all this nature that surrounds us? On the one hand we see that there is coexistence of the different entities within the same body/ecosystem. On the other hand we see the struggle that exists within due to division within the same ecosystem.

⁷ Keck, Leander E. *The New Interpreter’s Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002) pp 946-948

⁸ Sacks, Jonathan *The Dignity of Difference: How to avoid the clash of civilization* (New York, NY: CONTINUUM, 2005) pp. 64-65

Religious Educators play a vital role in bridging the gap between these divided societies. There is a vast knowledge that is transmitted to the learner. These are eye-openers and help the learner to visualize things differently. The learners would be empowered organically as leaders to carry on what they have learnt into their communities. Some of the methods which can be adapted include and are not limited to these: *CREATE*

Celebrate Diversity: Religion/Religious Education should foster sisterhood and brotherhood, which should encourage tolerance, respect, compassion, peace, reconciliation, caring, and sharing. This diversity is to be celebrated and cherished for its richness. Our concern must be to embrace everybody and invite them into the community.⁹ It needs an eye for detail to appreciate the diversity even when we look into the everyday activities. This opens up the opportunity to celebrate the diversity that exists right among us and not out there somewhere.

Reconciliation: Reconciliation is real, radical, and revolutionary. Radical reconciliation during the first century looked like – “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28 NRSV This can be contextualized to address the roots of injustice. Theologian Gusatavo Gutierrez states reconciliation is revolutionary and it means “to abolish the present status quo and attempt to replace it with a qualitatively different one.”¹⁰

Empower: Empowering the community by imparting religious education and equipping the community with relevant tools to encourage cooperation. These tools might include, living out by faith in the community, to be an inclusive community, coming together, intentional focal point for intercultural engagement.¹¹ Empowerment lets the individual see things from a different perspective. They would not just remain as the *connoisseur*; rather they empower others in the community to take up the leadership roles as they *taste* the realness of life.

Acknowledge: Acknowledge the witness that we all bear in common as being created in the image of God. As religious educators we also need to acknowledge the chasm that exists in our society, and offer the avenues which open up possibilities to bridge the gap. By acknowledging that there is a divide, we let people see and appreciate the community amidst these divisions.

Thoughtful: Thoughtfulness and timely approach are very vital to bridge the gap. As an educator it is important to be thoughtful of the learner’s physical, spiritual, state. This helps to provide a customized approach to each individual as the lesson plan unfolds. There are also timely steps to be taken to maximize the creativity within the individual and in the community as a whole.

Embodiment: Personally embodying the values that we teach as religious educators. Imparting these pedagogical content of knowledge. The embodiment of what we teach carries a deeper impact in the lives of the learners. The learners will not be able to comprehend unless they see these teachings being enacted in the lives of their educators. Moreover they will be able to visualize their own lives transformed by embodying what they learn.

⁹ Tutu, Desmond *God Is Not a Christian: And Other Provocations* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011) pp. 49-56

¹⁰ Boesak & DeYoung *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012) pp. 14-23

¹¹ Keum, Jooseop *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Switzerland, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publication, 2013) pp. 22-26

Conclusion: As religious educators we have a unique responsibility to bridge the gap in our communities. As we continue to educate and impart wisdom of coexistence in these divided societies, we need to embody the values that are consistent with the teaching. There are a wide variety of approaches that we can consider as educators. “Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life.”¹²

“The idea of conviviality, with its three aspects of sharing with each other, learning from each other, and celebrating together, appears helpful in an interreligious and secular context. It is one way that dialogue can take place such that the two parties do not lose their identity.”¹³

Dialogical method of teaching involves both the teacher and the student to participate in the learning process. Design a curriculum with multiple intelligences with the Scope that brings the community together; and a sequence that would open up the forum for conversations. We need to work toward the deconstruction of the locus: from *I* to *WE*; and from *WE* to *US*. As we teach to transgress there is *liberation* from these divisions. We need to make it a vibrant thriving community which includes all the living species and brings them together as a community.

We need to pick the common threads that run in our societies and in our religion. The divided societies create a ground for more separation. Education needs to be imparted in ways that bring unity and one that breeds love. The coming together is the beginning of a new creation. When we come together we need not agree on what we discuss. We as educators need to encourage the differences and talk about what enriches the symbiosis. Our ecosystem is an example of coexistence. Whether it is a teachable moment or a happy accident let us as great teachers, *CARE* for our creation as we *co-create* life!

C – Celebrate Mistakes
A – Appreciate Differences
R – Relay Feedback
E – Evaluate Ourselves

I am looking at the rising sun as a wonderful promise the creation has to give each one of us. Nature is a living example for coexistence in today’s divided societies. The sun shines on all humans alike, does not discriminate, and does not hold grudge or hatred. What can we learn by *seeing* things around us, right in our own neighborhood?

Dialogue, as we have been thinking of it, is more than communication. It is communion in which we are mutually informed, purified, illumined, and reunited to ourselves, to one another, and God.¹⁴ We need to work so much for coexistence, for tolerance, and be willing to disagree on matters of conflict and defend our opinion. At the same time there is a need to respect our adversaries and our willingness to dialogue and negotiate. “There is room for everyone; there is room for every culture, race, language, and point of view.”¹⁵

¹² Francis, Pope *LAUDATO SI’: On Care For Our Common Home* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2015) pg. 139

¹³ Simon, Benjamin *Mission and Its Three Pillars: Translation, Transmission, and Transformation* (Bognor Regis, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2018) pg. 409

¹⁴ Howe, Reuel L. *The Miracle of Dialogue* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1964) pp. 105-121

¹⁵ Tutu, Desmond *God Is Not a Christian: And Other Provocations* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011) pp. 49-52

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