



“If there are things which separate us, there are also always things which unite us and which facilitate respect and friendliness....use and emphasize them.”
Saint Josemaría Escrivá

2026 Theme: Building Bridges - the Art of Dialogue

Political violence is on the rise. War abounds. Our virtual, technological culture is making it increasingly difficult to find spaces of real encounter. Loneliness, anxiety, and fractured relationships are the result. In analyzing these different crises, we arrive at the same diagnosis: people have stopped talking to each other. How would our world change if we re-learned how to dialogue?

The word “dialogue” has Greek roots. Literally, it means “through word,” but for the ancient Greeks, it had a great depth of meaning. In contemplating the world, they noticed a logic or “logos” that seemed to order all reality. They believed that it was precisely because of this order that reality was intelligible to them. A person trying to explain reality spoke “logos” if they were faithful to this inscribed logic; their speech was “rational.” True dia-logos, therefore, is not only achieved through speech, but also through reason and reality. For the Greeks, this reality-seeking discussion was the key to intellectual growth.

UNIVLab 2026 is where we'll explore the art and bridge-building potential of dialogue where it matters most.

Bridges don't stand on fluid terrain: they require foundations. Just so, dialogue requires convictions. Philosophy and psychology help us understand the why and how of our convictions, and therefore, of our dialogue. Human nature is rational and relational, but also fallible and free. Our capacity to know the truth is much greater when we talk things through. Psychologically, this requires openness, but also firmness. Personal convictions should be open to reality, not closed in on themselves. A person who forms convictions in pursuit of the truth maintains a healthy curiosity, a readiness to adjust her stance if someone presents a perspective that she had not seen before. Rather than closing herself off, a commitment to the truth is precisely what opens her up to others in dialogue.

If dialogue is a bridge, friendship is its buttress. Friendship is dialogue on the relational level. Motivated by her love, a friend takes an interest, listens, tries to understand, talks, works through conflict, and rectifies. Our times are desperately calling for this kind of commitment to connection, to embodied relationality. It is only through opening up to another that we approach the truth, about the world and even ourselves.



Bridges are constructed with many kinds of materials. And dialogue on the societal level takes many forms: free and spirited debate, a commitment to fundamental principles, readiness to compromise... The objective is the common good. But only by listening to all members of our communities can we foster a good that is truly common. If we want words instead of weapons and plurality instead of polarization, we must commit to social dialogue, be that in politics or in our institutions.

Join us at UNIVLab 2026. Let's Build Bridges together, and rediscover the Art of Dialogue.

General Topics

The UnivLab workshops will be approaching the theme from seven perspectives:

1. Dialogue in the Thought of Josemaría Escrivá
 - See bibliography below
 - What are the Christian foundations and motivations for dialogue?
 - In the effort to build bridges, how does one avoid the extremes of fanaticism and relativism?
2. Politics & Public Discourse
 - Debate vs. Dialogue: what is their unique role and value in the public sphere?
 - What is the common good, and what role could it play in building political bridges?
3. Philosophy
 - Does truth exist?
 - What is the nature of the human person? And what implications does that have for the why and how of dialogue? Does dialogue have intrinsic value (good in itself) or only instrumental value (good for achieving something else)?
4. Forming Convictions
 - What does it mean to be “open-minded?” Are having firm convictions compatible with dialogue? What is the difference between convictions, fanaticism, indifference, and relativism?
 - How could curiosity, study, critical thinking, and empathy favor a culture of dialogue?
5. Technology, Culture & Media
 - In the effort to build bridges, what opportunities and threats does the media pose?
 - What role could art and storytelling play in fomenting connection and dialogue?
 - Are social media and the culture of encounter compatible? Does technology create new spaces for dialogue?



- Do we dialogue with the content we consume? How do we build bridges in the era of ChatGPT and social media algorithms?
- 6. Relationships & Psychology
 - What is the art of conversation? What skills and attitudes does it require? Does today's culture favor or threaten those in any way?
 - How do we embrace a relational lifestyle in an individualistic culture?
 - What is the role of forgiveness in building bridges?
 - How do intergenerational and intercultural relationships enrich us?
- 7. University & Workplace
 - Listening: what is its role in building bridges on personal, institutional, and societal levels?
 - What does a commitment to the truth look like in pluralistic universities and workplaces?
 - How can we navigate controversial conversations with university professors and coworkers?

Bibliography

Some questions to guide your reflection:

- What is dialogue? What is its aim? What value does it bring to the person, relationships, and society?
- Are commitment to the truth and openness compatible? What are the dangers posed by extremism in one or the other of these values?
- How does one engage in dialogue? What skills and habits are necessary? In which ways is contemporary culture facilitating those habits and in which ways is it hindering them?

Text from San Josemaría

- [Letter of St. Josemaría about charity in the transmission of the faith](#), Letter 4 from The Collected Letters, volume I.
- Ideas for incorporating this letter into UNIV preparatory workshops
 - **9-10: Discussion - The Virtues of Dialogue**
St. Josemaría admits a tension between holy intransigence and holy tolerance. He then presents the four cardinal virtues as the means to resolving the tension. *Discuss the unique importance and role of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude for engaging in dialogue.*
 - **12: Discussion - Avoiding Both Fanaticism & Relativism with Practical Tips**



St. Josemaria argues that being committed to the truth and being open-minded are compatible. He also cites possible dangers for people who tend to emphasize one over the other: commitment to the truth could give way to fanaticism, and open-mindedness could give way to relativism. *Discuss the ways in which we confuse tolerance for indifference, intransigence for extremism (Note: in point 23, he offers a practical tip for avoiding the first mistake, and in point 10, he offers a tip for the latter).*

- **13: Discussion - Evangelization & Dialogue**

St. Josemaria lists a number of ways in which dialogue manifests itself in evangelization: not walling ourselves off from certain types of people, having the courage to give verbal testimony, really listening to our friends and taking their concerns seriously etc. *Discuss fears, best-practices, challenges, and successes in sharing our faith with others.*

- **19: Challenge - The Christian Argument for Dialogue**

Dialogue has human value. But Revelation strengthens that value. In this section, St. Josemaria mentions two points of Christian dogma that make dialogue a truly Christian act. *See if your group can pick them out.*

- **15-16: Brainstorm: Dialogue in my Daily Life**

How do I bring dialogue from the clouds into my daily life? In this section of the letter, St. Josemaria gives a few concrete ideas. *See if your group can brainstorm their own examples of day-to-day bridge building.*

- **16-18: Prayer Material** St. Josemaria reflects on Jesus's example of dialogue in the Gospels. *Print out this section for the girls' prayer time.*

Popular Resources

- [Courageous Dialogue Toolkit](#), Barbara Whitlock & Karen E. Bohlin.
 - Courageous Dialogue: What are we aiming at?, pg. 27.
 - Habits to Cultivate for Courageous Dialogue, pg. 28.
 - Why Courageous Dialogue is Vital to Civic Culture, pg. 29-31.
 - A Lesson Plan: Foster Empathy, Respect & Fair-Mindedness, pg. 39-40.
 - A Lesson Plan: Truth In Journalism & Dorothy Thompson, pg. 41-42.
- *Aprender a escuchar*, Aquilino Polaino.
- *Scout Mindset*, Part IV: Changing Your Mind, Julia Galef.
- *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*, Al Switzler.
- Constructive Dialogue Institute [Activity Guide: Listening Sessions](#)
- Ser y hacerse hermanos en la convivencia sociopolítica, Maria Aparecida Ferrari.
[Ser y hacerse hermanos en la convivencia sociopolítica - Opus Dei](#)
- The Catholic Voices 'Ten Principles of Civil Communication:' 1. Don't get mad. Reframe. [The Catholic Voices 'Ten Principles of Civil Communication'](#)



Philosophical Resources:

- *Le sens du dialogue*, Jean Lacroix
- *Euthyphro*, Plato: [plato-euthyphro.pdf](#)
- *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt. [The human condition / by Hannah Arendt](#)
 - Section II, 7 – The Public Realm: The Common
 - Section V, 24 – The Disclosure of the Agent in Speech and Action
 - Section V, 25 – The Web of Relationships and the Enacted Stories
 - Section V, 28 – Power and the Space of Appearance
 - Section V, 33 – Irreversibility and the Power To Forgive
 - Section VI, 35 – World Alienation

Documents from the Magisterium & Figures of the Church

- [Fratelli tutti \(3 October 2020\)](#), Pope Francis:
 - The Illusion of Communication, 42-50.
 - Chapter 6: Dialogue & Friendship in Society, 198-224.
 - Chapter 7: Paths of Renewed Encounter, 225-270.
- [Caritas in veritate \(June 29, 2009\) - Encyclicals](#), Pope Benedict XVI: Introduction, 1-7 [dia-logos, common good, justice, charity in truth].
- [Fides et Ratio \(14 September 1998\)](#), John Paul II
 - Dialogue as a necessary condition for reason – Chapter III (the “Intellego ut Credam” section) stresses that human reason “needs to be sustained in all its searching by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship,” 33. Here dialogue is presented as a relational prerequisite for genuine philosophical inquiry.
 - Dialogue as the basis for universal truth and communion – In Chapter VII (Current Requirements and Tasks) the Pope writes that “the belief that a universally valid truth can be known ... is the essential condition for sincere and authentic dialogue between persons,” 92.
- [Holy Mass in the Crypt of Saint Peter's Basilica \(11 May 2025\)](#), Pope Leo XIV.
- *In the Light of the Gospel: Short Meditations*, Fernando Ocariz, Listening: Silence in Action.

Audiovisual Resources:

- [David Brooks: How To Know a Person](#) ;
Longer version: [How To Know a Person with David Brooks](#)
- [Why "scout mindset" is crucial to good judgment | Julia Galef | TEDxPSU](#)
- [Would You Defy Reality | Solomon Asch's Conformity Experiment](#)
- [El tiempo es corto para amar](#)
- Documentary: [The Social Dilemma | Official Trailer | Netflix](#)
- [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story | TED](#)



- [Jordan Peterson What is Dialogue?](#)
- [How our friendship survives our opposing politics | Caitlin Quattromani and Lau...](#)
- [Cómo hablar con otros que piensan distinto | Guadalupe Nogués | TEDxRiodel...](#)
- [How we can face the future without fear, together | Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks](#)
- Youtube Series: *La importancia del Diálogo*, Vicente de Haro.
 - [T1, Ep. 1: Cultura del diálogo | Expertos en Serie](#)
 - [T1, Ep. 2: Importancia del diálogo en las universidades y en la socieda...](#)
 - [T1, Ep. 3: Obstáculos que nos impiden dialogar | Expertos en serie](#)
 - [T1, Ep. 4: Desafíos del diálogo | Expertos en serie](#)