

Religions for Peace

Episode 2 Podcast Discussion Guide

“Understanding the Sacred Across Traditions”

Overview

In Episode 1, we explored Shared Sacred Flourishing as a shared ideal across faiths—and the Shared Sacred Worldview beneath it, which grounds the solidarity that religious and spiritual leaders rely on as they face the world's greatest crises: climate change, injustice, and war – and as they seek to advance the common good.

In Episode 2, we look more closely at how different *Religions for Peace* members understand the Sacred—and the unique ways each tradition names and honors the divine—and how this diversity can become a source of unity rather than division. We explore how these traditions see the world's polycrisis as the result of neglecting sacred virtues such as love, compassion, and the deep connection among all beings.



Shared Sacred Flourishing (SSF) – Episode 2 Discussion Guide

Part 1: Key Concepts & Definitions

Before beginning your group discussion, review how the speakers define these foundational perspectives on the Sacred and human community:

- **Ubuntu:** A Bantu framework summarizing relational human existence as *"I am because you are; you are because I am."* It emphasizes that individual wholeness and coexistence are fundamentally interconnected.
- **Buddha Nature:** In Buddhist thought, the uncreated, all-pervading capacity for wisdom and compassion within every person and living being, calling individuals to move past fixed judgments and recognize human potential.
- **Shalom / Advaita (Wholeness & Non-Duality):** Complementary interfaith expressions of ultimate reality. *Shalom* (Hebrew) implies complete harmony, peace, and systemic wholeness rather than a mere absence of conflict. *Advaita* (Sanskrit, "not two") describes the non-dual relationship between the individual self (*Atman*) and the singular sacred reality (*Brahman*), where all manifest beings express one divine source.

Part 2: Discussion Questions

Module 1: Distinct Traditions, Shared Sacred Ground

Sister Agatha introduces the concept of *Ubuntu*: *"We are one family... We have to find ways to coexist — and not just to coexist, but to coexist well."* Meanwhile, Professor Anantanand Rambachan notes that through *Darshan* (sacred seeing), *"In looking into your eyes, I look into the eyes of the divine."*

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- How do these distinct cultural and religious frameworks (*Ubuntu* and *Darshan*) challenge the modern tendency to view people primarily through political, national, or doctrinal labels?
- Reverend Kyoichi Sugino outlines three dimensions of virtue: *Kansei* (emotional appreciation of beauty/reverence), *Chisei* (intellectual understanding of systemic interdependence), and *Hinsei* (moral modesty and gratitude). How can cultivating all three dimensions help individuals avoid cynicism during global crises?

Module 2: Ritual Practice and Mindful Awareness

Rabbi David Rosen explains that saying blessings throughout the day—from eating food to witnessing nature—is a practice of conscious awareness: *"A blessing is an expression of consciousness, of awareness, that we don't take things for granted... the whole of Judaism may be described as an extensive blessing."*

- How can daily micro-practices or rituals (such as blessings, chanting, or meditation) transform routine human interactions into encounters with the sacred?
- Bhai Sahib Professor Mohinder Singh warns that ego and arrogance mean *"edging God out,"* while genuine love *"demands sacrifice."* What specific sacrifices—of ego, comfort, or resources—are necessary for religious communities to collaborate effectively across lines of difference?

Module 3: Putting the Sacred to Work in Real-World Crises

Dr. William Vendley emphasizes that *"societies don't have parts... society is a potential whole of whole people,"* while Dr. Francis Kuria shares how religious leaders intervened during the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone and political unrest in Burkina Faso by addressing *"the problem behind the problem."*

- In the Sierra Leone Ebola response, religious leaders adapted traditional burial rites to protect public health while preserving religious dignity. How can faith communities balance ancient sacred traditions with modern health or safety requirements during a crisis?
- In Iraq, former adversaries set aside political and theological differences to care for war-injured children. Why are shared humanitarian concerns (like child welfare or disaster relief) often the most effective entry points for interfaith peacebuilding?

Part 3: Call to Action & Moving Forward

To close your session, have each participant select one of the following practical action steps to pursue this month:

- **Observe:** Practice *Darshan* or mindful recognition in daily routines—consciously acknowledge the inherent dignity and sacred value of three people you encounter outside your usual social circle (e.g., service workers, strangers, or political opposites).

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- **Adapt:** Partner with a local faith-based or community organization to identify a practical health, environmental, or social challenge in your neighborhood, helping adapt local responses to respect diverse cultural and spiritual needs.
- **Bless:** Establish a daily discipline of active gratitude or blessing—stopping before meals or routine tasks to acknowledge the web of labor, nature, and community that makes your daily life possible.

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