

## TEACHING SPIRITUAL CARE NONRELIGIOUS

### Appendix C: Verbatim as Theological Event (VTE)

(Adapted from a presentation by Rev. Will Spong at The Healthcare Chaplaincy, Incorporated, perhaps in the 1970's)

The verbatim report is not only a record of a conversation between the chaplain/caregiver and the resident/patient/client. It is also an event which takes place *again* when it is presented to a group. In this VTE seminar, the presenter of the verbatim stands back from the verbatim and views it as an event, in and of itself. In doing this, they become a participant (again) in the pastoral event as it becomes newly alive in the group.

The purpose of a VTE seminar is not to enter into debate or critique or judgment of the spiritual care offered, but rather for each person to be free to make theological connections with the pastoral event unfolding before him/her. Like the facets of a diamond, revealing the gem's great beauty and sparkle, the gathering of many perspectives on a pastoral event brings to light a depth and breadth of theological issues/truths/questions inherent within it.

#### **1. Presentation of the Event.**

The presenter introduces the verbatim, reads the descriptive material to set the stage, answers for purposes of clarification any preliminary questions members of the group may have, and then reads aloud (with another person (s)) the text of the encounter. No analysis of the Verbatim is read.

The presenter remains silent now, until step 7.

Each other participant in the group offers a response to each of the following questions, which a facilitator records on a flip chart or whiteboard:

#### **2. Key Messages/Couplets**

Pick out the key messages in the interaction, taking into account both verbal and nonverbal communication. The key message will not necessarily be any words that were actually spoken. Express the key message in a couplet (dialogue) form.

#### **3. Dynamics of the Key Messages**

What images/theories/truths make organizing sense of what is happening in this interpersonal event? Group members may use language of any type, including those of psychology, music, culture, or may draw a picture to represent an image of the interpersonal dynamic.

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### **4. Personal and Professional Identification**

With which person from the verbatim do you identify more/most deeply? Name the character and give a brief statement of how you identify.

### **5. Sacred Sources**

What stories, passages, themes, images from literature/art/poetry/music come to mind? These could be from the Bible, Talmud, hymnody, poetry, other scriptures, music, dance, visual arts, etc., in fact, from any source you regard as authoritative and revelatory of truth.

### **6. Theology**

What theological/ultimate issues are inherent in this pastoral event? What theological issues are raised for **you** in this encounter?

### **7. Give the Event Back to the Presenter**

Now the "floor" returns to the presenter, who is free to ask questions and/or share what she/he has learned. Exs. What questions do you have about your peers' perspectives on this event? What do you think they may have missed? What insights did you gain from the group analyzing this verbatim as a VTE? Where are your own points of identification with the material (steps #2-#6)? What is theologically at stake for you in this encounter?

### **8. Group Discussion of Compelling Theological Issues Identified and Discussed**

The facilitator opens up conversation on the identified theological issues themselves, giving group members a chance to explore their varying approaches to them.

The facilitator gives the Presenter the flip chart sheets from this seminar, to do with as she/he pleases.