



Topic
5

Individual Preparation

1. Familiarize yourself with the “Conversation of the Spirit” (see below)
2. Take time to read and prayerfully reflect on the Synthesis Report, particularly the Topic determined by organization (parish, school, group) – (see attached)
3. Be prepared to share your reflection (4 minutes max) with your group.



Adsumus Prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance
lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who are at work in every
place and time, in the communion of the Father
and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

CONVERSATION IN THE SPIRIT

(aka: SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION)

What is Conversation in the Spirit?

Conversation in the Spirit is the process that is being used for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Synod on Synodality in Rome 2023 & 2024.

Two years ago, in 2022, the Archdiocese of Agana held “Listening Sessions” to give input for the 2023 Assembly. The results of our listening sessions were synthesized into a 10-page report that was then sent to the Pacific Conference of Bishops (CEPAC). The reports that were sent from all (arch)dioceses within the Continent of Oceania were then sent to Rome, as were all reports from all the continents throughout the world. The converging of the Instrumentum Laboris 2023 (working document) for the work of the Assembly of Bishops and for the first time, non-Bishops.

The Conversation of the Spirit was the method used to “listen” to all the reports and to prayerfully process them throughout the month of October 2023. The Synthesis Report of the Assembly’s work has been completed and published. All baptized are asked to be familiar with the report.

The faithful has been asked to once again reflect and the work of the Assembly of 2023 using the same method by the Assembly, following the process as closely as possible. Please reflect on the topic that is being offered by your organization for the consultation. The reports of all the conversations / consultations will be sent to the Pacific Conference of Bishops by April, 2024 for the preparation of the next working document for the Assembly in Rome in October 2024.

What is spiritual conversation?

Spiritual conversation focuses on the quality of one’s capacity to listen as well as the quality of the words spoken. This means paying attention to the spiritual movements in oneself and in the other person during the conversation, which requires being attentive to more than simply the words expressed. This quality of attention is an act of respecting, welcoming, and being hospitable to others as they are. It is an approach that takes seriously what happens in the hearts of those who are conversing. There are two necessary attitudes that are fundamental to this process: Active listening and speaking from the heart.

What is the primary goal of spiritual conversation?

The aim is to create an atmosphere of trust and welcome, so that people can express themselves more freely. This helps them to take seriously what happen within them as they listen to others and speak. Ultimately, this interior attentiveness makes us more aware of the presence and participation of the Holy Spirit in the process of sharing and discernment.

What is the focus of spiritual conversation?

The focus is on the person with whom one is speaking and oneself, and what we are experiencing on a spiritual level. The fundamental question is: “What is happening in the other person and in me, and how is the Lord working here?”

Active Listening

- ② The goal is to try and understand others as they are.
- ② Listening not only to what the other person says, but also to what he or she means and what he or she might be experiencing on a deeper level. This means listening with a heart that is open and receptive.
- ② This way of listening is “active” because it involves paying attention to more than one level of expression of the other. In order to do so, one must participate actively in the listening process.
- ② Listen to the other while he or she is speaking, do not interrupt, and do not focus on what you are going to say afterwards.
- ② Welcoming, without judgement, what the other person says, no matter what one thinks about the person or what they have said. Each person is an expert on his or her own life. We must listen in a way that is “more disposed to giving a good interpretation to what the other says than condemning it as false” (Spiritual Exercises, no. 22)
- ② We must believe that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the other person.
- ② Welcoming without prejudice is a deep way of welcoming the other in his or her radical uniqueness.
- ② Active listening is letting oneself be influenced by the other and learn from the other.

Speaking from the Heart

- ② This means sincerely expressing oneself, one’s experience, one’s sentiments and thoughts.
- ② It involves speaking about one’s own experience and what one truly thinks and feels.
- ② We take responsibility not only for what we say, but also for what we feel. We do not blame others for what we feel.
- ② Share the truth as we see it and as we live it, but do not impose it.
- ② Speaking from the heart is offering a generous gift to the other, in return for being actively listened to.
- ② This process is greatly enriched by a regular personal practice of the Examen Prayer (see below). Without a habit of discernment and knowledge of oneself, one cannot actively listen or speak from the heart.

What are the desired attitudes for spiritual conversation?

- ② Active and attentive listening
- ② Listen to others without judgement.
- ② Pay attention not only to the words, but also to the tone and feelings of the speaker.
- ② Avoid the temptation of using the time to prepare what you will say instead of listening.
- ② Intentional speaking.
- ② Express your experiences, thoughts, and feelings as clearly as you can.
- ② Listen actively to yourself, mindful of your own thoughts and feelings as you speak
- ② Monitor possible tendencies to be self-centered when speaking

The conversation in the Spirit

A dynamic of discernment in the synodal Church



Silence, prayer and listening to the Word of God

PERSONAL PREPARATION

By entrusting oneself to the Father, conversing in prayer with the Lord Jesus and listening to the Holy Spirit, each one prepares his or her own contribution to the question about which he or she is called to discern.

«Taking the word and listening»

Each person takes turns speaking from his or her own experience and prayer, and listens carefully to the contribution of others.



Silence and Prayer

«Making space for others and the Other»

From what the others have said, each one shares what has resonated most with him or her or what has aroused the most resistance in him or her, allowing himself or herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit: "When, listening, did my heart burn within me?"



Silence and Prayer

«Building together»

Together we dialogue on the basis of what emerged earlier in order to discern and gather the fruit of the conversation in the Spirit: to recognize intuitions and convergences; to identify discordances, obstacles and new questions; to allow prophetic voices to emerge.

It is important that everyone can feel represented by the outcome of the work.

"To what steps is the Holy Spirit calling us together?"



Final prayer of thanksgiving

What is the Examen?

The examen is a prayerful reflection from the Spiritual Exercises which has become a key part of Jesuit life and which can have a powerful impact on the lives of those who use it. It consists of setting time aside each day (for Ignatius twice a day, at midday and the end of the day) to reflect prayerfully on the events of the day and where God has been in those events.

The examen is an exercise in the practice of attentiveness to my lived experience and also in the art of discernment – becoming aware of the ways in which God is active in my life and resolving to cooperate better with his gifts and calling.

How to do the Examen?

There are 5 steps to the Examen in the *Spiritual Exercises* (n43) of St. Ignatius of Loyola:

1. Give thanks. Spend a few moments in gratitude for the gifts of the day.
2. Ask for light. Ask God to enlighten you, showing where he has been at work and present in your day through events, people, and places.
3. Examine the day. Review the moments of the day, noticing what has led to consolation and what has led to desolation and my reaction to these events, people, and places.
4. Seek forgiveness. Ask God's forgiveness for the times when you have acted, spoken, or thought contrary to God's grace and calling for you.
5. Resolve to change. Decide what in your behavior or attitude you will try to improve tomorrow.

The Ignatian Concepts of *Consolation and Desolation*

St. Ignatius' use of the concepts of consolation and desolation are critical to understanding and practicing the examen.

Consolation is when something is deeply and genuinely good for us, good for our souls leads us towards God and away from our self-preoccupations.

Desolation is when something is not good for us, when we are wrapped up in ourselves, and careless of God's gifts and grace working in us when we substitute other things in place of God.

Note: Ignatian means spiritual consolation / desolation. While these may be found in our thought and emotional responses, they are not the same as our feelings of delight and despair.

St. Ignatius give us a quick rule of thumb to "test" whether something is truly consolation or truly desolation: by noticing the faith hope and love in us. Something that is truly consolation will show itself in an increase in faith (ie. Self-confidence in myself, in my family, in my colleagues and pupils, in society in general and in God), and increase in hope (ie. I am positive about things always seeing the best, seizing the little opportunities that come my way, having a reason to get out of bed in the morning), and an increase of love (ie., the loving and compassionate ways I treat those around me, especially those I find difficult to love).

5. A Church "out of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation"

“We are guided by the question: “HOW can we be a synodal Church in mission?”

The objective of these new reflections is to identify the **path we can follow and the tools we might adopt** in our different context and circumstances in order to enhance the unique contribution of each baptised person and of each Church in the one mission of proclaiming the Risen Lord and his Gospel to the world today.” (Towards October 2024)

- A. In preparing your 4 minute reflection, you are invited to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to read the Synthesis Report: 5. A Church "out of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation" [Convergences (a-f), Matters for Consideration (g-k), Proposals (l-q)]. *(See next few pages)*
- B. **Please choose one or more of the following questions to prepare your reflection:**
- Do you feel connected to other cultures in our community?
 - How can we unify and celebrate our different cultures?
 - In what ways can we build bridges, cultivate mutual understanding that accompanies, listens, and learns from each other with greater sensitivity to the riches of our diverse expressions of being Church?
 - How are we giving witness by embracing every tribe and nation? Is there any group being left out?
 - The Mass is the common form uniting all; how do we gather as one?
 - What ways of relating, structures, processes of discernment and decision-making with regard to mission make it possible to recognize, shape, and promote co-responsibility in the Church? What ministries and participatory bodies of the Church can be renewed or introduced to better express this co-responsibility? (Towards October 2024)

Excerpt from “A Synodal Church in Mission: Synthesis Report”

Topic 5. A Church “out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation”

Convergences

- a. Christians live in specific cultures, bringing Christ to them in Word and Sacrament, engaging in the service of charity with humility and joy, receiving the mystery of Christ that already awaits us in every place and time. In this way we become a Church that welcomes people from "every tribe, tongue, people and nation" (Rev. 5:9).
- b. The cultural, historical, and continental contexts in which the Church is present reveal different spiritual and material needs. This shapes the culture of the local churches, their missionary priorities, the concerns and gifts that each of them brings to the synodal dialogue, and the languages with which they express themselves. During the days of the Assembly, we were able to experience directly, and mostly joyfully, the diverse expressions of being Church.
- c. Churches live in increasingly multicultural and multireligious contexts. This necessitates finding ways to create dialogue between religions and cultures, with which Christians should engage alongside the many groups that compose a society. Living the Church's mission in these contexts requires a style of presence, service and proclamation that seeks to build bridges, cultivate mutual understanding and engage in evangelisation that accompanies, listens and learns. In the Assembly the image of "taking off

one's shoes" to cross the threshold towards encounter with the other resonated as a sign of humility and respect for a sacred space, on an equal footing.

d. Migration reshapes local churches as cross-cultural communities. Migrants and refugees, many of whom bear the wounds of uprooting, war and violence, often become a source of renewal and enrichment for the communities that welcome them and an opportunity to establish direct links with geographically distant churches. In the face of increasingly hostile attitudes toward migrants, we are called to practice an open welcome, to accompany them in the construction of a new life and to build a true intercultural communion among peoples. Respect for the liturgical traditions and religious practices of migrants is an integral part of an authentic welcome.

e. Missionaries have given their lives to carry the Good News to the whole world. Their commitment is a great testimony to the power of the Gospel. However, particular attention and sensitivity are needed in contexts where "mission" is a word laden with painful historical memories that hinders communion today. In some places, the proclamation of the Gospel was associated with colonization, even genocide. Evangelising in these contexts requires acknowledging mistakes made, learning a new sensitivity to these issues, and accompanying a generation seeking to forge Christian identities beyond colonialism. Respect and humility are fundamental attitudes needed to recognise that we complement each other and that encounters with different cultures can enrich the living and thinking of the faith of Christian communities.

f. The Church teaches the need for and encourages the practice of interreligious dialogue as part of building communion among all peoples. In a world of violence and fragmentation, a witness is ever more urgent to the unity of humanity, its common origin and common destiny, in a coordinated and reciprocal solidarity toward social justice, peace, reconciliation and care for our common home. The Church is aware that the Spirit can speak through women and men of every religion, belief and culture.

Matters for Consideration

g. We need to cultivate a greater sensitivity towards the riches of our diverse expressions of being Church. This requires a search for a dynamic balance between the dimension of the Church as a whole and its local rootedness, between respect for the bond of Church unity and the risk of homogenization that stifles variety. Meanings and priorities vary among different contexts, and this requires identifying and fostering forms of decentralization.

h. The Church too is affected by polarization and distrust in vital matters such as liturgical life and moral, social and theological reflection. We need to recognize the causes of each through dialogue and undertake courageous processes of revitalizing communion and processes of reconciliation to overcome them.

i. In our local churches, we sometimes experience tensions between different ways of understanding evangelisation: emphasis on a witness of life, commitment to human advancement, dialogue with faiths and cultures, and explicit proclamation of the Gospel. Equally, a tension emerges between the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ and valuing the characteristics of each culture in search of the Gospel traits (*semina Verbi*) it already contains.

j. Possible confusion between the Gospel's message and the culture of those engaged in evangelisation was mentioned as one of the issues to be explored.

k. Increasing conflicts, with the trade and use of increasingly powerful weapons, opens up the question, raised in several groups, of more reflection and formation in order that we can manage conflicts in a non-violent way. This is a valuable contribution that Christians can offer to today's world in dialogue and collaboration with other religions.

Proposals

l. Renewed attention is needed to the question of the languages we use to speak to people's minds and hearts in a wide diversity of contexts in a way that is both beautiful and accessible.

m. We need a shared framework for managing and evaluating experimentations with forms of decentralisation, identifying all the actors involved and their roles. For the sake of coherence, discernment processes regarding decentralisation must take place in a synodal style, envisaging the concurrence and contribution of all actors involved at different levels.

n. New paradigms are needed for pastoral engagement with indigenous peoples, taking the form of a common journey and not an action done to them or for them. Their participation in decision-making processes at all levels can contribute to a more vibrant and missionary Church.

o. From the work of the Assembly, there is a call for better knowledge of the teachings of Vatican II, post-conciliar teaching and the Church's social doctrine. We need to know our different traditions better in order to be more clearly a Church of Churches in communion, effective in service and dialogue.

p. In a world where the number of migrants and refugees is increasing while the willingness to welcome them is decreasing and where the foreigner is viewed with increasing suspicion, it is appropriate for the Church to engage decisively in education, in the culture of dialogue and encounter, combating racism and xenophobia, especially through pastoral formation. Equally, it is necessary to engage in concrete projects for the integration of migrants.

q. We recommend continued engagement in dialogue and discernment regarding racial justice. Systems within the Church that create or maintain racial injustice need to be identified and addressed. Processes for healing and reconciliation should be created, with the help of those harmed, to eradicate the sin of racism.