



Synodality & Discernment

The art of Conversation in the Spirit

Jubilee of Consecrated Life
Friday, October 10th

Friday, October 10, 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Deepening and complete experience of Conversation in the Spirit

3:30 PM Opening with Adsumus prayer

3:40 PM More in-depth presentation of Conversation in the Spirit and the afternoon's proposal

4:05 PM Personal preparation time on questions for Conversation in the Spirit:

Throughout the various stages of this Jubilee in Rome, what moments, words, or experiences particularly touched, challenged, or enlightened me? How did I perceive the action of the Holy Spirit during these days? What calls and paths of conversion do I hear for myself, my community, and for consecrated life in general? How can we concretely become more pilgrims of hope and peacemakers in our daily lives and missions?

4:15 PM – 5:45 PM Conversation in the Spirit in groups of 6 (same sharing group as yesterday)

1st round: 5 minutes per person = 30 minutes + 3 minutes of silence for personal time

2nd round (6 x 2 minutes) 12 minutes + 2 minutes of silence

15-minute break

30 minutes for the final part which *must lead to writing together a prayer based on what has been shared and what emerges from discernment*

5:45 PM Debrief on the experience and questions about Conversation in the Spirit.

6:30 PM End with brief prayer of thanksgiving



Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus

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.



Starting point: What was your experience of conversation in the Spirit in your small group yesterday?



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

- 1 minute of silence to remember your experience of Conversation in the Spirit from yesterday
- What did you find helpful, fruitful, and/or difficult?

A synodal Church is a listening and discerning Church

Exploring the Synodal Methodology



The synodal methodology: The first fruit of the Synod



Where does this method come from?

1) From first-hand experiences around the world

- Listening to good synodal practices as part of the work undertaken by the Commission on Methodology for the Synod 2021-2024
- Method used at the Plenary Council of Australia
- Method used in religious life for discernment in common
 - Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for groups/organizations (Canada, USA), the experience of discernment in common with an apostolic aim (ESDAC)

2) From the experience of this Synod

“A way forward for the synodal Church: Conversation in the Spirit”
(section A.2. in the first *Instrumentum Laboris* from 2023)

§ 32. Through the course of the first phase of the Synod and across all the continents there has been recognition of the fruitfulness of the method referred to here as “conversation in the Spirit” or “synodal method” (cf. figure on p. 16).

§ 34. In the local Churches, **conversation in the Spirit has been accepted and sometimes “discovered” as providing the atmosphere that makes possible the sharing of life experiences and the space for discernment in a synodal Church.** In the Final Documents of the Continental Assemblies, it is described as a Pentecostal moment, as an opportunity to experience being Church and to move from listening to our brothers and sisters in Christ to listening to the Spirit, who is the authentic protagonist, and being sent forth in mission by Him. At the same time, through this method, the grace of the Word and the Eucharist becomes a felt, actualised and transforming reality, which attests to and realises the initiative by which the Lord Jesus makes himself present and active in the Church. Christ sends us out on mission and gathers us around himself to give thanks and glory to the Father in the Holy Spirit. Hence from all continents comes the request that this method may increasingly animate and inform the daily life of the Churches.

3) Biblical and spiritual roots

§ 35. **Conversation in the Spirit is part of a long tradition of ecclesial discernment**, which has produced a plurality of methods and approaches. Its precise missionary value should be emphasised. This spiritual practice enables us to move from the “I” to the “we”: it does not lose sight of or erase the personal dimension of the “I,” but recognises it and inserts it into the community dimension. In this way, enabling participants to speak and listen becomes an expression of liturgy and prayer, within which the Lord makes himself present and draws us towards ever more authentic forms of communion and discernment.

§ 36. In the New Testament, there are numerous examples of this mode of conversation. **A paradigmatic account is provided by the account of the encounter of the Risen Lord with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus** (cf. Lk. 24:13-35; *Christus Vivit*, §237). As their experience demonstrates, conversation in the Spirit builds communion and brings missionary dynamism. The two, in fact, return to the community they had left to share the Easter proclamation that the Lord is risen.

4) Apostolic Foundation: Experiences of discernment in common in the earliest days of the Church

- In the face of:
 - Major decisions to be made
 - Conflicting perspectives
 - New circumstances
 - Controversies regarding the correct interpretation of faith in Jesus
- Examples in the Acts of the Apostles:
 - Replacement of Judas (Acts 1:15-26)
 - Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) to decide on conditions for admitting Gentile Christians into the Church

The first ecumenical councils

- Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon, etc.



5) Theological foundations of conversation

- The conversation of love in the communion of the Trinity
- **A dialogical vision of Revelation in the light of the Second Vatican Council**

“In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (cf. Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (cf. Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4). Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (cf. Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (cf. Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (cf. Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself” (*Dei Verbum*, §2).
- **Paul VI’s dialogical vision of the Church**

« L'Eglise doit entrer en dialogue avec le monde dans lequel elle vit. L'Eglise se fait parole ; l'Eglise se fait message ; l'Eglise se fait conversation. »

“The Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. The Church has something to say, the Church has a message to deliver; the Church has a communication to offer” (*Ecclesiam Suam*, §65).



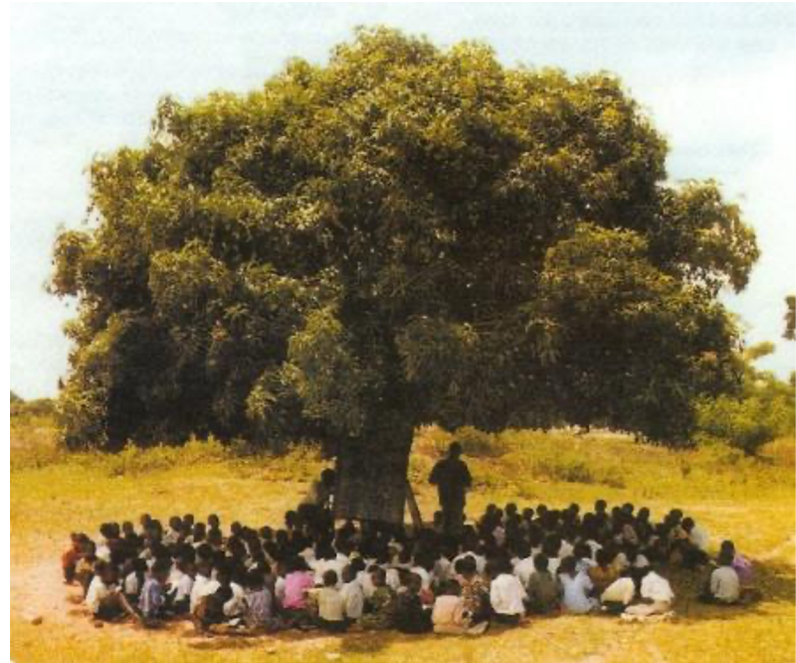
6) Ancient practices arising from deep sources of human wisdom

- The example of “Talking Circles” among Indigenous peoples or the palaver tree in Africa

CIRCLE TALKS

In its simplest form a circle talk:

- is done in a complete circle
- only the person holding the stick talks, all the rest listen
- the stick is passed around in a clockwise direction
- a person talks until they are finished, being respectful of time
- the circle talk is complete when everyone has had a chance to speak
- a person may pass the stick without speaking, if they so wish
- if desired, the stick may be passed around again
- what is said in the circle stays in the circle
- a circle is used to discuss issues of importance
- is extremely respectful of everyone as individuals and what they have to say.



7) A method that meets an anthropological need

“Conversation in the Spirit is a tool that, even with its limitations, enables authentic listening in order to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Its practice has elicited joy, awe and gratitude and has been experienced as a path of renewal that transforms individuals, groups, and the Church. The word "conversation" expresses more than mere dialogue: it interweaves thought and feeling, creating a shared vital space. That is why we can say that conversion is at play in conversation. **This is an anthropological reality found in different peoples and cultures, who gather together in solidarity to deal with and decide matters vital to the community.** Grace brings this human experience to fruition. Conversing "in the Spirit" means living the experience of sharing in the light of faith and seeking God's will in an authentically evangelical atmosphere within which the Holy Spirit's unmistakable voice can be heard.” (*Synthesis Report 2023*, §2.d.)



A method that responds to the deep needs of the human person as a relational being

A relational anthropology:

- Convergences between development sciences/neurosciences and Christian anthropology.
- Understanding based on reciprocity, humans are embodied organisms, holistic, relational and not reducible to a functional aspect.

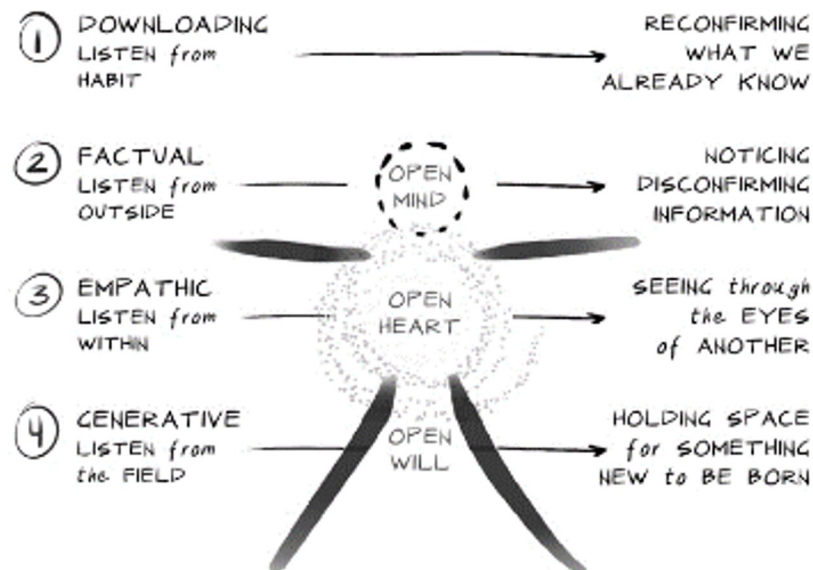
- ❑ Human beings are fundamentally relational.
 - ❑ Human beings are made for love and friendship, for reciprocal relationships.
 - ❑ Human beings must be considered holistically, integrating their different bodily, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.
 - ❑ Human beings are vulnerable and fragile, imperfect and incomplete: we need others.
 - ❑ Human beings are interdependent and interconnected.
- Human beings thrive by participating in a network of relationships where everyone has something to give and receive.



Generative conversation

“Generative conversation is a dialogue created around a theme that a group of people has chosen to explore together. The aim of the dialogue is to understand the topic being explored, and to deepen the connection at group or community level. **Generative conversation can be seen as the art of group listening.**” Solange St-Pierre,

Generative conversation, a practice coming from Theory U (October 2016), <https://www.diffusion-focusing.org/doc/theorie-u-conversation-generative.pdf>



Four Fields of Listening
The Essentials of Theory U - www.ottoschärmer.com

Beyond “words”, what are we listening for?

Basic rules for discernment



Consolation

- The good spirit is leading us
- Dynamism, gratitude
- Increased hope, faith in God, love for neighbour
- Moments of suffering because of sin, evil
- Alignment, consistency with the Spirit's invitation
- Signs that we are on the right track!



Make the most of this moment and commit it to memory



Go back to an inner place of dependence on God



Desolation

- The bad spirit is leading us!
- Decreased dynamism
- Discouragement, doubts, inner darkness
- Withdrawal into oneself
- Feeling separated from God
- Moments when we are no longer in alignment



Do not change what you have decided in time of consolation!



Intensify prayer, Examen



Remember that grace is given to me to overcome this desolation



Be patient: consolation will return

And in practical terms...?

Deepening into the three rounds



A way forward for the synodal Church: conversation in the Spirit

The conversation in the Spirit

A dynamic of discernment in the synodal Church



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.

Silence, prayer and listening
to the Word of God

«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



Facilitating a process of discernment

- Intentional speaking (the “I”): Being concise – focusing on the most important thing, touching on the essential... It is not a summary but a synthesis.
- Active listening (the “you”): Inviting people to see what moves them interiorly as they listen and allow time for silence to gather their thoughts before moving on to sharing their reflections.
- Building together (the “us”): Be able to see the group as a whole. After listening to everyone, what is common among us? Of all that has been shared, what helps to capture the thoughts of the whole group?

Conversation in the Spirit

By sharing the fruits of our own prayer and reflection, and by listening attentively to those of others, we seek to better discover the ways of the Spirit, how He reveals Himself, how He acts, how He leads us to walk together, welcoming our differences and bringing them into harmony.



Conversation in the Spirit



A discerning prayer

- At the end of my prayer, I select what I would like to share with the group. I choose what has had the greatest impact on me and what I consider most essential in response to the question at hand.

FIRST ROUND

- Each person shares what they have discerned as the fruit of their prayer. In this round, there are no interruptions and only questions of clarification may be asked.

Conversation in the Spirit



A TIME OF SILENCE BETWEEN ROUNDS

- What have I heard, beyond the words?
- What has moved me the most? Has it given me peace, joy, confidence, motivation?
- Is there anything that has saddened me or demotivated me?
- Are there things that have become clearer?
- Are there consequences emerging from what has been expressed?

Conversation in the Spirit



SECOND ROUND

- After a period of silence, participants share their reflections, new insights, disagreements, common points, and differences.

THIRD ROUND

- Points of consensus and areas for further development are identified.
- Participants choose what they will contribute to the rest of the group. They thank the Lord for his work in the group.

What fruit does conversation in the Spirit bear?

Trust

Trusting God's presence and action in our hearts and lives, in the group, and in each individual members.



Justice

Each participant benefits from the same conditions and the same time.

Communion

The aim is not to advance my point of view to the detriment of others, but to listen together to what the Spirit is telling us.

Reconciliation

We talk about our experiences, not ideas. This allows us to go beyond personal opinions and connect on a deeper level.

Inclusion

Everyone's voice is important. Everyone is heard and taken into account.



The impact of an experience of synodality with Conversation in the Spirit

- The joy of fraternity
- A missionary momentum
- Communion
- Empowerment and commitment
 - Deepening one's own identity, reassurance, confirmation and/or encouragement of one's vocation and ministry
- A new vision of the church and/or a greater love for and commitment to the church
- The desire for participation, collaboration, and co-responsibility
- A call to change
 - A change of approach in ministry and the endorsement of synodality
 - A new way to lead in a more collaborative style
- A Church on the Move



Listen to others and broaden your own perspectives



In conclusion

“Conversation in the Spirit is a tool that, even with its limitations, enables authentic listening in order to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Its practice has elicited joy, awe and gratitude and has been experienced as a path of renewal that transforms individuals, groups, and the Church. The word "conversation" expresses more than mere dialogue: it interweaves thought and feeling, creating a shared vital space. That is why we can say that **conversion is at play in conversation**. This is an anthropological reality found in different peoples and cultures, who gather together in solidarity to deal with and decide matters vital to the community. Grace brings this human experience to fruition. **Conversing "in the Spirit" means living the experience of sharing in the light of faith and seeking God's will in an authentically evangelical atmosphere within which the Holy Spirit's unmistakable voice can be heard.**”
(*Synthesis Report 2023*, §20.d.)



John 21: Moving from “I” to “us” following Jesus’ call

Simon Peter said to them, ‘**I am going fishing.**’ They said to him, ‘We will go with you.’ They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.



Jesus said to them, ‘Children, you have no fish, have you?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ He said to them, ‘**Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.**’ So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

Preparing for a second moment of sharing

- **Recalling my Experience:** Throughout the various stages of this Jubilee in Rome, what moments, words, or experiences particularly touched, challenged, or enlightened me?
- **Tuning to the work of the Spirit:** How did I perceive the action of the Holy Spirit during these days?
- **Discerning emerging calls:** What calls and paths of conversion do I hear for myself, my community, and for consecrated life in general? How can we concretely become more pilgrims of hope and peacemakers in our daily lives and missions?



Helpful roles in each group

- Timekeeper: One member of the group manages the timing of the three rounds. Through a gentle hand gesture, he or she lets the speaker know when they have one minute left. This ensures that each person has an equal opportunity to speak.
- Note-taker: Another member of the group could note down the most relevant insights that emerge from the 2nd and 3rd rounds.

You will be asked to capture the most salient elements and movements experienced in a prayer that you will submit on a link that will be provided to you. You will also be invited to share how the experience was for you in the plenary after the break.

Preparing for a second moment of sharing

Open our ears Lord, our whole being,
That we may become a listening presence to each other,
Give us the generosity to listen with openness
Grant us the curiosity of a child
The wisdom to understand what is heard
The joy to celebrate new discovery
The prudence to know when not to speak
The surrender that treasures silence after word
The strength to be changed by what is shared
Grant us the grace to listen with humble love
The awe to hear you speaking in us.

4:15 PM – 5:45 PM Conversation in the Spirit in groups of 6 (same sharing group as yesterday)

- **1st round: 5 minutes per person = 30 minutes**
- + 3 minutes of silence for personal time
- **2nd round (6 x 2 minutes) 12 minutes**
- + 2 minutes of silence
- **15-minute break**
- **30 minutes for the final part**

which must lead to writing together a prayer based on what has been shared and what emerges from discernment



5:00pm
We invite you to
take a brief break
and come back
here for ROUND 3
after 15min

ROUND 3

Istituti religiosi

**Scan the following
code to submit your
small group's
prayer**



<https://forms.gle/Wf81CQtHgUkaJ9q19>

Closing Plenary

A moment for integration and questions

A brief moment of silence (individual reflection)

- Take a few minutes to reflect and draw some meaningful conclusions from the overall experience of sharing:
- How was the experience? What fruits do you wish to take back to their own communities? (both the practical and spiritual takeaways)
- What insights or questions do you wish to share in the plenary?

Sharing in small groups (8min)

Opening the Conversation in plenary & Final Announcements

Please check the reading materials to download on the Vita Consacrata Website in preparation for Saturday's afternoon workshop

