



Synodality & Discernment

The art of Conversation in the Spirit

Jubilee of Consecrated Life
Thursday, October 9th

An invitation for this afternoon and tomorrow afternoon
Engaging in a synodal dynamic



Starting point: Reconnecting to your own experience

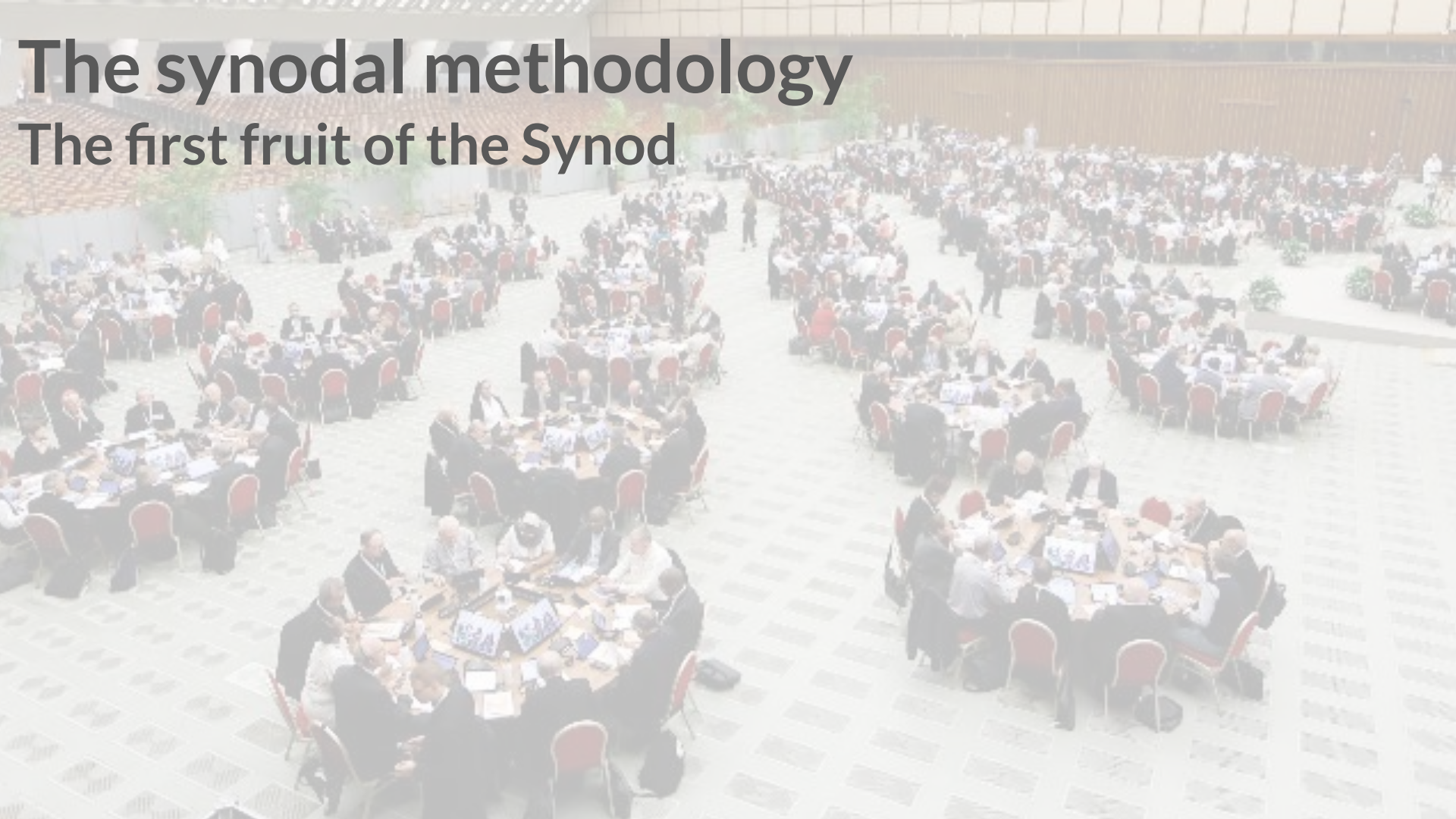


For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

- 1 minute of silence to call to mind a conversation in which you have recognized the presence of the Spirit at work, whether at the time or in retrospect
- **How did this conversation become an experience of the Holy Spirit?**

The synodal methodology

The first fruit of the Synod



A definition of synodality

“Synodality is the walking together of Christians with Christ and towards God’s Kingdom, in union with all humanity. Orientated towards mission, synodality involves gathering at all levels of the Church for mutual listening, dialogue, and community discernment. It also involves reaching consensus as an expression of Christ rendering Himself present, He who is alive in the Spirit. Furthermore, it consists in reaching decisions according to differentiated co-responsibilities. Along these lines, we can understand better what it means to say that synodality is a constitutive dimension of the Church” (ITC, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, §1).

“In simple and concise terms, synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ” (*Final Document*, §28).

“Conversation in the Spirit is a tool that, even with its limitations, enables listening in order to discern ‘what the Spirit is saying to the Churches’ (Rev 2:7). 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 evangelical atmosphere within which the Holy Spirit’s unmistakable voice can be heard”** (*Final Document*, §45).



What the Holy Spirit is revealing, through Synodality, is a hope-filled path forward that we walk together, not apart.

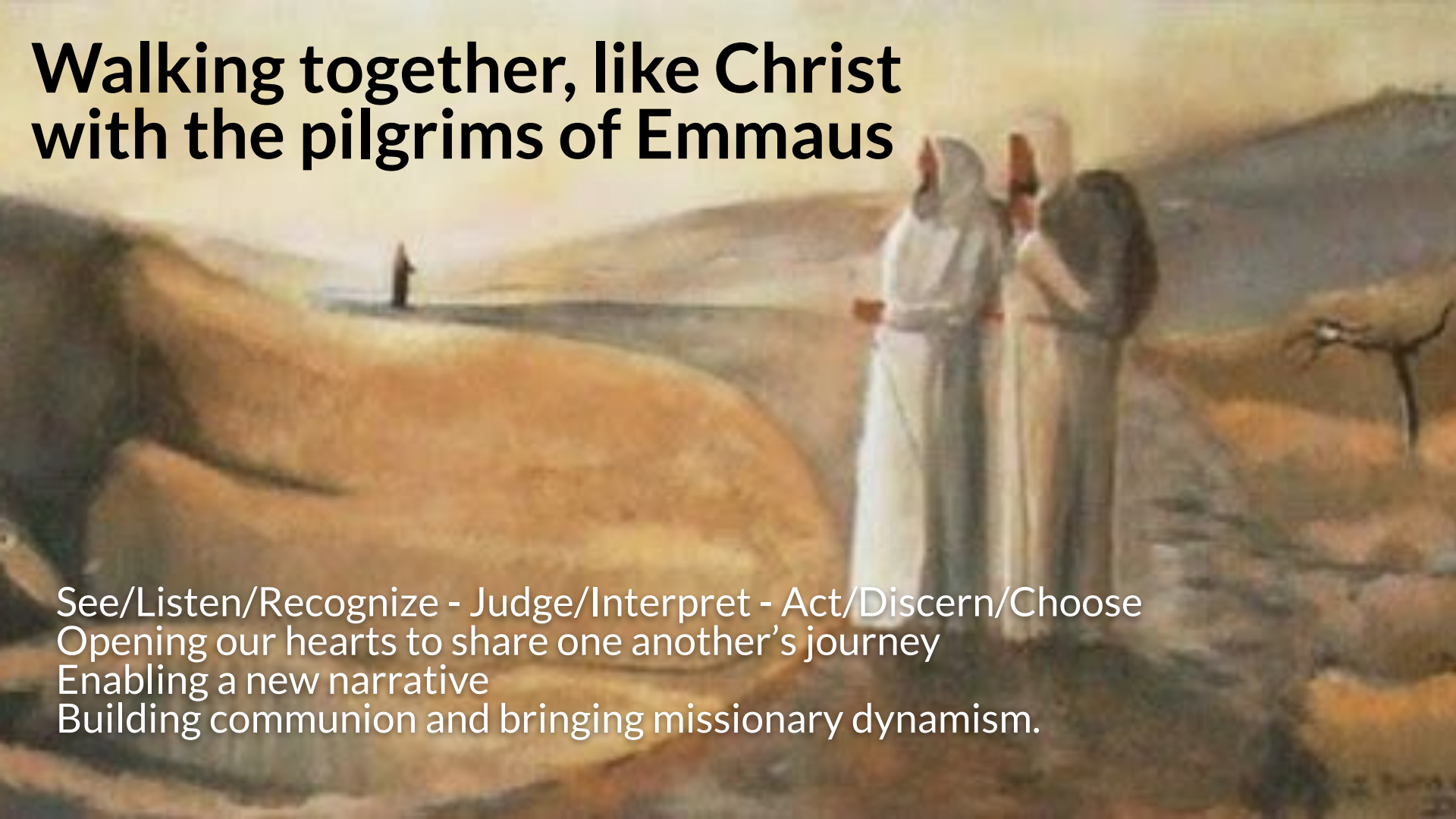
A close-up photograph of a dandelion seed head on the right side, with numerous seeds blowing away in all directions against a clear, light blue sky. The seeds are white with dark brown seed heads.

Becoming Together, Detectors of Grace

“We gather for discernment and we rightly ask: What shall we do?
An even more fundamental question is: What is God doing? Do we accept God’s
gracious newness?”

Timothy Radcliffe, Synod Retreat

Walking together, like Christ with the pilgrims of Emmaus



See/Listen/Recognize - Judge/Interpret - Act/Discern/Choose
Opening our hearts to share one another's journey
Enabling a new narrative
Building communion and bringing missionary dynamism.

“Entering into the expanse of God’s horizon”



“The *parrhesía* of the Spirit required the People of God on its synodal journey is the **trust, frankness and courage** to ‘enter into the expanse of God’s horizon’ in order to ‘ensure that a sacrament of unity exists in the world and that man is therefore not destined for dispersion and confusion.’ The lived and enduring experience of synodality is, for the People of God, a source of the joy promised by Jesus, a catalyst of new life, the springboard for a new phase of missionary commitment.”

(ITC, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, §121)

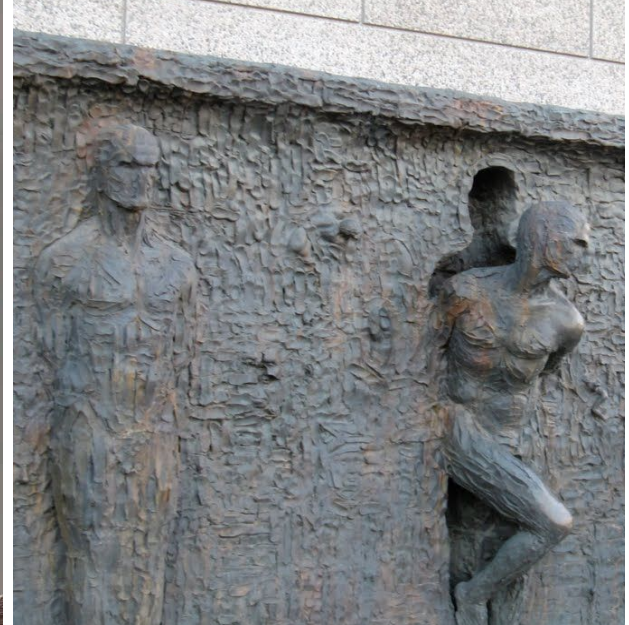
Intentionally disposing ourselves to listen



Daring to be surprised
Seeing with fresh eyes and
communicating from the heart



**Tuning in to the deeper story and
to what the Holy Spirit is doing**
Listening to inner movements



Enabling a new narrative to emerge
*Responding with inner freedom and
creativity*

Tending the soil: Key attitudes to cultivate

- *Faith and trust in God*
- *Listening*
- *Humility*
- *Decentering*
- *Prayer*
- *Dialogue and sharing*
- *Trust in others*
- *Inner freedom*



Cultivating two basic skills/practices

ACTIVE LISTENING	INTENTIONAL SPEAKING
Welcoming what others say and also who they are. Maintaining a spirit of mutual trust & confidentiality.	Authentically expressing one's experience, feelings, and thoughts (speaking in the first person).
Listening beyond words. Paying attention to what the other person might be experiencing interiorly.	Maintaining integrity. Trying not to let your initial sharing be influenced by what others have said.
Setting judgment aside. Keeping an open mind, cultivating curiosity	Being attentive not only for what one says, but also to what one feels.
Allowing oneself to be affected by the Other. Having an open heart, giving rise to compassion.	Speaking as a free, generous gift to another, in reciprocity for being actively listened to.
Realizing that silence is appropriate and necessary.	Speaking briefly and clearly (using notes if helpful).
Protecting mutuality. Making sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to speak (keeping the time).	Being present, following the process in service of a communion of hearts (the group is not a place to debate, discuss hot-button issues, or resolve personal problems).

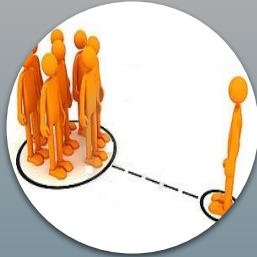
A sharing that takes place in various rounds
Facilitating a movement from “I” to “we”



Facilitating a multi-level process of discernment



MYSELF
(personal
time)



YOU
(time for
listening to
each person)



US
(bringing
things
together in
harmony)

Description in the first *Instrumentum Laboris* (2023)

§ 37. In its concrete reality **conversation in the Spirit can be described as a shared prayer with a view to communal discernment** for which participants prepare themselves by personal reflection and meditation. They give each other the gift of a meditated word nourished by prayer, not an opinion improvised on the spot. **The dynamic between the participants articulates three fundamental steps. The first is devoted to each person taking the floor**, starting from his or her own experience reread in prayer during the period of preparation. Others listen in the knowledge that each one has a valuable contribution to offer and refrain from debates or discussions.

§ 38. Silence and prayer help to prepare for the next step, in which each person is invited to open up within his or herself a space for others and for the Other. Once again, each person takes the floor: not to react to or counter what they have heard, reaffirming their own position, but to express what from their listening has touched them most deeply and what they feel challenged by most strongly. **The interior traces that result from one's listening to sisters and brothers are the language with which the Holy Spirit makes his own voice resound.** The more each participant has been nourished by meditation on the Word and the Sacraments, growing in familiarity with the Lord, the more he or she will be able to recognise the sound of His voice (cf. Jn 10:14.27), assisted also by the accompaniment of the Magisterium and theology. Likewise, the more intentionally and carefully participants attend to the voice of the Spirit the more they will grow in a shared sense of mission.

§ 39. The third step, again in an atmosphere of prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is **to identify the key points that have emerged and to build a consensus on the fruits of the joint work**, which each person feels is faithful to the process and by which he or she can therefore feel represented. It is not enough to draw up a report listing the most often mentioned points. Rather, discernment is needed, which also pays attention to marginal and prophetic voices and does not overlook the significance of the points on which disagreement emerges. The Lord is the cornerstone that will allow the "construction" to stand and the Spirit, the master of harmony, will help to move from cacophony to symphony.

§ 40. The journey leads to a prayer of praise to God and gratitude for the experience. "When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord's greatest and most beautiful gifts. **Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God.** Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God" (EG 272). This, in a nutshell, is the gift received by those who allow themselves to be involved in a conversation in the Spirit.

§ 41. In concrete situations, it is never possible to follow this pattern slavishly. Rather it must always be adapted. Sometimes it is necessary to give priority to each one taking the floor and listening to the others; in other circumstances to bringing out the links between the different perspectives, in search of what makes "our hearts burn within us" (cf. Lk 24:32); in others still, to the explication of a consensus and working together to identify the direction in which one feels called by the Spirit to move. But, beyond the appropriate concrete adaptations, the intention and dynamism that unite the three steps are and remain characteristic of the way of proceeding of a synodal Church.

§ 42. Bearing in mind the significance of conversation in the Spirit to animate the lived experience of the synodal Church, formation in this method, and in particular of facilitators capable of accompanying communities in practising it, is perceived as a priority at all levels of ecclesial life and for all the Baptised, starting with ordained Ministers in a spirit of co-responsibility and openness to different ecclesial vocations. Formation for conversation in the Spirit is formation to be a synodal Church.

An overview of the three rounds

Facilitating a movement from “I” to “we”



Personal Prayer and Reflection



A moment of silence

Round 1

*Personal Sharing (based on the fruits of personal prayer and reflection):
A time for authentic speaking and contemplative listening*



A moment of silence

Round 2

*Reflective Sharing:
What resonates in me from what I heard in the first round?*



Round 3

*Discerning Conversation:
What convergences and common themes emerge? What are the consequences of what we shared?
What divergences call us to go deeper? What interior movements do we notice in our group?
Closing Prayer*

Today we will experience only the first 2 rounds

The conversation in the Spirit

A dynamic of discernment in the synodal Church



4:30 PM – 5:20 PM Sharing in groups of 6 on site (only the first 2 rounds)

1st round: 4-5 min per person (30 minutes)

3 minutes of silence for personal time

2nd round (2 min per person) (12 minutes)

Silence to write down 1-2 fruits of this sharing

Helpful roles in each group

- Timekeeper: One member of the group manages the timing of the 2 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 conversation.



A personal time for prayer



In the context where I live, what situations and realities have put my hope to the test?

What signs of hope do I see, what are examples of things I have either experienced or witnessed that have strengthened my hope?

