



Synodal-styled Small Group Spiritual Conversation

Small group conversation session time: 1.5 hours

(*This time does not include a large group presentation and closing.)

Introduction and reviewing of group dynamics (10 minutes) *6-8 people per group.

- A. Welcome participants and invite each person to offer a one brief sentence introduction.
- B. Ask the group for volunteers for notetaking/large group sharing and timekeeping. The notetaker's notes are handed to the small group facilitator following the small group conversation and large group sharing.
- C. Sharing of the ground rules.
 1. This conversation is a safe place to talk. We will treat each other and what anyone says with reverence and respect.
 2. One person speaks at a time.
 3. We will listen with an open mind. Do not respond to another's comments unless to ask clarifying questions. Each person shares their own story, experience and reality.
 4. We will stop the conversation at certain intervals to pray and reflect in silence.
 5. Our primary mode is dialogue: when we speak our purpose is to advance the conversation. Please avoid arguing or comments. Stay on topic.
 6. Keep to the time limit of speaking so that everyone can share. All are asked to engage in sharing.
 7. The facilitator shares last on each round.
 8. This is a forward-looking conversation, so lean toward ideas for moving forward towards unity, engagement and mission.
- D. The questions to be answered by the end of the conversation are the following:
 1. **Personal and parish/community engagement: How can we encourage and enhance stronger relationships between the Church's structure(s)/organization/leadership/life and each baptized person that moves us towards greater unity as one Body of Christ in proclaiming the Risen Lord and His Gospel for our Diocese today?**
 2. **Engaging with the Diocesan Church: How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of truth, love and mercy in Christ?**

PRAY and REFLECT: Prayer and personal preparation (3 minutes of prayer and silent reflection)

- Pray together: *Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who has taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*
- Reflect in silence and prepare to share: The mission of the Church of Christ, which all together includes the hierarchal leadership, the serving laity, the communities of the faithful, and all the Baptized children of God, is to proclaim the Risen Lord and His Gospel to all we encounter and in all we do.

Round #1 Guiding question: As a community of the faithful and as Baptized children of God, what are the causes and realities that contribute to disunity and disengagement in our local faith community?

Round #1: (3 minutes per participant) No group notetaking during this round.

- Share and listen: Each participant takes a 3-minute turn to answer the guiding question just reflected about in silence. All other participants listen attentively and with open hearts.

PRAY and REFLECT: Silent reflection as a group (3 minutes)

- Reflect in silence: From the experiences shared by other participants, what was said that moved me, stirred my interest, opened my eyes to another reality? What is the Holy Spirit saying and stirring in me from the experiences shared?

Round #2: (2 minutes per participant) Notetaking round.

- Share: From the experiences shared by other participants, what was said that moved me, stirred my interest, opened my eyes to another reality? What is the Holy Spirit saying and stirring in me from the experiences shared?

PRAY and REFLECT: Silent reflection as a group (2 minutes)

- Remembering what was shared in Round 2, reflect on the following questions:
 1. Personal and parish/community engagement: How can we encourage and enhance stronger relationships between the Church's structure(s)/organization/leadership/life and each baptized person that moves us towards greater unity as one Body of Christ in proclaiming the Risen Lord and His Gospel for our Diocese today?
 2. Engaging with the Diocesan Church: How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of truth, love and mercy in Christ?

Round #3: Prayerful Discernment and Suggestions for Action (20 minutes) Notetaking round in preparation for large group sharing and reporting.

- Share as a group: How has the Holy Spirit moved us to respond to the two main questions proposed to us today? (See questions listed above Round 3.)
 - Response to question #1: Identify and list suggestions for moving forward as a united Body of Christ in proclaiming the Risen Lord and His Gospel in our own faith communities.
 - Response to question #2: Identify and list suggestions for ways the local Diocesan Church and the faithful people of God can cooperate and collaborate to proclaim the Gospel as a community of truth, love and mercy in Christ?

PRAYER of GRATITUDE and RESPONSE: Have the notetaker review the notes to share from Round #3.

- Read out loud as a prayer of gratitude all the suggestions listed for moving forward as a united and mission driven Body of Christ. After reading the notes, invite each participant to add one short phrase of gratitude for the opportunity to share in this spirit-filled conversation together.