

Welcoming and Building Communion Together



ESDAC Manual for facilitators

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We want to thank all the persons who contributed to the conception of this manual,
principally, and with infinite gratitude :

ISECP

(Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for the Corporate Person).

The ISECP team enriched the practice
of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius
by considering a group of persons as a single person,
animated by the Spirit and called to make decisions.

ESDAC¹

(Exercices Spirituels de Discernement Apostolique en Commun)

The ESDAC team has continued to develop the method.

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¹ To know more about ESDAC, see : www.esdac.net and the charter of ESDAC :
<http://www.esdac.net/Charter-of-International-ESDAC.html>



I. DISCERNING THE SPIRIT AT WORK IN US AND BETWEEN US

Basic conviction: The Spirit of God is in everyone².

Therefore, it is necessary to

- give to each person the opportunity to speak in order to hear the infinite richness of what the Spirit wants to say and give to each one,
- discern what comes from the Spirit and what does not come from the Spirit³,
- to allow ourselves to be more and more transformed by the Spirit.

The word discernment covers two distinct realities:

1. discernment of the **Spirit**⁴, which is the subject of this chapter,
2. discernment of what **action** to take together, which is the subject of chapter III⁵.

The goal of this formation is to teach future facilitators how to help retreatants to experience for themselves the action of the Spirit (SE 15)⁶. Our retreatants often come from a society influenced by secularism. Therefore, it is perhaps more judicious to begin by speaking to them about the Spirit rather than about God or Jesus Christ.

When a group is functioning well, we say that a real team spirit exists, that there is an « esprit de corps », mutual respect, cordiality, teamwork... Doesn't this "esprit de corps" describe the atmosphere of the group, the air that it breathes, the Spirit that animates it, the impetus and energy that drives it? Spirit, vital impetus, Divine energy, are these not all terms that our contemporaries would use to indicate the trail toward Whom tradition names the Holy Spirit?

² See Acts 2: 17: "I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind". See also John 4: 10; Mt 15: 21-28; Ac 10: 47 etc.... Ignatian spirituality invites to seek and find God in everything.

³ We are not only inspired by the Spirit. Just after saying to Jesus "You are the Christ" Saint Peter balks before the prospect of the cross and hears Jesus tell him: "Get behind me, Satan" (Mt 16: 15 & 23)

⁴ Ignatius speaks of « discernment of spirits, the good spirit and the bad spirit ». ». From a teaching point of view, it might be better to speak about « discernment of the Spirit and that which is opposed to the Spirit ». This is in order to avoid speaking of the good and bad spirits as realities, which, as antagonists, would be of equal strength. The power of the Holy Spirit is superior to that which is in opposition to it (Mk 3: 27; Mt 13: 24-29).

⁵ The discernment of an action to take, presupposes a discernment of the Spirit in our conversations.

⁶ SE =Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola : <http://www.jesuit.org/jesuits/wp-content/uploads/The-Spiritual-Exercises-.pdf>

Spiritual conversation: definition and examples

**Spiritual conversation
is a conversation in which the participants⁷ have a desire
to be open to the Holy Spirit.**

Examples of spiritual conversation

The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4: 1-42).

The conversation between the disciples of Emmaus and Jesus (Lk 24: 13-35).

The conversations of Ignatius after his conversion: «At this time in his life, he had been eager for some time for spiritual discussions and meeting persons who were capable of them. (A Pilgrim's Journey n° 34).

The conversations between Ignatius of Loyola, Francis-Xavier and Peter Favre in their tiny room in Paris (A Pilgrim's Journey n° 82).

The conversations between the person who gives the Exercises and the person who receives them (SE 21).

*The conversations within the Holy Trinity « Let us make man in our own image » (Gen 1: 26);
«Let us work the redemption of the human race » (SE 101-109).*

To become aware of feelings and longings to discern the Spirit at work

The Holy Spirit leaves traces of his passage in our “feelings,” a term that covers our sensations, emotions and sentiments;

Consequently, one of the first questions I need to ask myself is, “In such a situation **do I have agreeable or disagreeable feelings** - energy or fatigue - interest or boredom - joy or sadness - peace... fear - clarity... confusion - tears... anger?”⁸

Here is the second question, “**What need/desire/aspiration, satisfied or unsatisfied, do my feelings reveal:** communion, participation, compassion, security, respect, liberty, truth, creativity, exploration, time, space, food, rest, relaxation, hygiene, sexuality...”⁹

Becoming conscious of our « feelings » helps us to become conscious of our needs/desires/aspirations.

⁷ At least, one of the participants.

⁸ See a more comprehensive list of sensations/feelings/emotions in the Annexes, chapter VII.

⁹ See a more comprehensive list of needs/desires/longings in the Annexes, chapter VII.



Let us take an example. Andrew returns home at 7:00pm exhausted after his day at work. He finds his companion, Julie, spread out on the sofa watching television. Her shoes have been placed next to her on the table where they take eat! Andrew begins to see red... He **feels** an enormous anger growing within him. His **need** for hygiene is not being respected.

Here, Andrew has a choice. He can explode and yell at his companion, "Take your shoes off the table... that's disgusting." Or, he can take a deep breath in order to calm himself; briefly invoke the help of the Spirit of Communion and Compassion, move a chair next to Julie's chair and gently ask; "Have you had a hard day?"

Julie : « And how! »

Andrew : « Was it difficult at work? ».

Julie remains silent.

Andrew : « Did you have problems again with your boss? »

Julie : « Yes ».

Andrew : « You want to talk about it right now? »

Julie : « No ». She turns off the television. Silence fills the house.

Andrew turns toward the shoes on the table and says, « Those are good looking shoes!"

Then, he adds, « What bothers me is that they are on the table where we eat. **I really need** a certain amount of hygiene and order. I see that you are tired and that **you need** some rest. Would you like me to put your shoes away? ». It is clear that this evening with have an entirely different tone than it would if Andrew had let his anger explode. It is important to note also that Andrew did not fall into the trap of keeping silent in order to avoid conflicts. He **needed** to express what he felt.

All of the needs/desires listed in Annexe VII are universal, common to all human beings. Honoring them is a way to create **communion**.

The problem is that my immediate aspirations, here and now, are not necessarily the same as yours, here and now. Andrew had a need for hygiene and order at the same moment that Julie had a need for rest and relaxation.

Communion is intensified when, as Andrew did for Julie, we try to sense what the **needs** are that the other person is experiencing¹⁰. This requires that first of all, we make an effort to pay attention to our own disagreeable sentiments and unsatisfied needs. Andrew began by becoming conscious that he was furious and that he would have liked to wring Julie's neck. It is often timely to pray briefly to the Spirit, as Andrew did, asking for inspiration concerning what to say and what not to say, about what to do and what not to do, and then asking the Spirit to give us the force to do it.

The Spirit creates communion. One of the most profound aspirations of everyone is to be able to take pleasure in living together, thanks to our attention to one another and for one another. The fundamental question, therefore, is, "**What will give us more life and joy, here and now, for you AND for me, simultaneously?**"

We need to add, "**And what will give more life also to all the people in the world, particularly to those who are in the greatest need?**" Because we are all members of the human family, and in this family there is an incalculable number of persons whose needs for security, food, lodging etc. are ignored, and their aspirations for liberty, participation,

¹⁰ See SE 21 and the beginning of the Annexes chapter VII.



respect etc. are disregarded. To be in communion with them, how far can we go in renouncing legitimate needs, desires and aspirations such as health, security, respectability, our affections? We ask the Spirit for enlightenment for this discernment and the strength to carry out the necessary decisions.¹¹

*

In our personal life, or that of a group to which we belong, what enables us to recognise that a sentiment of joy, or of peace, is generated by the Holy Spirit?

- When this sentiment is linked to the satisfaction of our fundamental aspiration to **live together, thanks to the effort of one another**, you and me, all of us, united, first of all, to all of those whose needs are the most ignored.
- When this sentiment is accompanied by a consciousness that the origin of the sentiment is **a gift** that comes from the Supreme Giver and that this gift unites us to Him, and to one another in the gratitude of receiving all from Him¹²,
- When **it lasts** over time without anyone doing anything to stimulate it¹³,
- When it is **gentle**, neither shrill nor boisterous¹⁴.

For more precision, it is important to refer to the rules of discernment in the SE 313 à 336.

¹¹ In each prayer sheet we ask for a specific grace (See chapters II and VI; SE 48 and Lk 11: 13).

¹² See SE 316 and 237.

¹³ See the foundational experience of Saint Ignatius : <http://www.esdac.net/The-foundational-experience-of-St-Ignatius.html>

¹⁴ SE 335

Needs, desires, are signs of our participation in the Trinitarian interdependence

The term *need* covers all of the following:

- our *bodily needs*, such as eating, drinking, sleeping...
- our *affective needs*, such as being welcomed, protected, belonging to a group...
- and our *need for self-development*, the need for meaning, to fully realise our potential, to be able to influence others, to be able to contribute to a more meaningful life for everyone.

longing,

The term *need* can, depending on the context, be replaced by: aspiration, wish, desire, longing, value, what is worthwhile for us.

Every action responds to a need. Needs are the motors in our life.

Frequently, it is sufficient just to recognise needs rather than satisfying them. In front of certain needs we are helpless, we cannot do anything...except to listen, perceive, understand, show empathy. It is our presence that is healing.

What risks creating conflicts is the *strategy*¹⁵ that we use to meet our need, rather than the need itself.

It is important to distinguish the *need* from the *request*. The request is a *strategy* that is employed to satisfy a need.

Our needs are a sign of our interdependence, of our relational nature; a result of the fact that we have been constructed using the model of our conceptors: the three Divine Persons. As with them, in order to exist and to be happy, **each one needs the other; we all need one another**. This interdependence lives in the Trinity without One person dominating the Other.

The divine Energy of communion¹⁶ is suggested by the use of this small word : “AND”. It permits me to respect your needs AND my needs, AND those of everyone simultaneously, right here and now. This Energy brings us present¹⁷ to one another, one for the other, each one because of the other¹⁸. It is the divine Energy of communion that we ask for in prayer in order that no one dominates another and that no one is dominated by another.

¹⁵ To own a car is not a need but a strategy used to respond to the need for mobility/or freedom.

¹⁶ Or the power of cohesion, wholeness, given by the Holy Spirit

¹⁷ A presence is a present, a gift.

¹⁸ All that in this handbook about longings, desires, needs as well as sensations/feelings/emotions, is due to the Non Violent Conversation (NVC) of Marshall Rosenberg. See especially *Practical Spirituality: The Spiritual Basis of Nonviolent Communication*, 2005, (32 pages) ISBN 978-1892005144. See also the Annexes chapter VII.

Our deepest longing, source or our freedom

In part V of this document, you will find a prayer sheet entitled « What is helping? What is hindering? » The text that is proposed for meditation is clearly that of the « Principle and Foundation » of the Exercises (SE 23).

Following this prayer sheet, you will find another one entitled: « My ‘zones’ of freedom and unfreedom » Here, with explanatory notes, is the text that is proposed for meditation:

Our deepest longing
is to live¹⁹
 one thanks to the other, one for the other²⁰,
being simultaneously sensitive²¹ to the needs of others AND to mine²²
 AND to those of everyone in the world -
 above all, to the needs of those who suffer most²³.

Therefore we are invited to seek freedom²⁴
 from all other longings
 such as health, security, fame, fondness...

This meditation text can help people who would not be inclined to admit that Man is created to worship, respect and serve God...

The vocabulary used is that of recent encyclicals that are addressed to all men of good will. It allows one, in a gentle way, to open the door to the Spirit of Communion and Compassion that unites the Father and the Son.

¹⁹ This includes life after physical death. It is the life that the Father gives to the Son. It is thus that He is Father. And it is of the life received from the Father that the Son makes his own life. It is in this that He is Son. That all human beings have life in abundance is the wish of the Son (See: John 10: 10 and 17: 3).

²⁰ This is true of the Persons of the Trinity in whose image we are conceived: They live One thanks to the Other, One for the Other, with a sensitivity One towards the Others, without One dominating the Other or being dominated by the Other. The Father doesn't take advantage (with arrogance and pride) of being the Source... and the Son rejoices in receiving everything from this Source. The Father says: « Be » and the Son says: « Yes », always in an eternal Present (See: John 17: 21).

²¹ The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), filled with compassion, approaches the wounded man. He does this in the image of the Son offering His life for all men.

²² The Golden Rule says: « do unto others as I would like them to do unto me » (Mt 7:12). When someone does not know anymore what to do, it can be helpful to ask this simple question: « What gives you life? »

²³ See: 1 Cor 12: 27.

²⁴ I cannot seek my freedom at the detriment of yours.

II. A FRAMEWORK FOR GROUP SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

During a time of communal discernment, those giving the Exercises are the members of the facilitating team, but they are, at the same time, participants. Everyone is influenced by, and has an influence on all the others. In a certain manner, everyone receives the Exercises and everyone gives them²⁵.

CHECK-LIST OF WHAT YOU NEED TO FACILITATE A GROUP

- Be at least **two** persons, if necessary more, to accompany.
- Set **time** aside: two hours, a day, five days, ten...
- Choose a **space** that is agreeable (home, building, surroundings...).
- Invite everyone to form a **circle**: a sign that everyone is equal. The Spirit is in everyone.
- In the centre, place the **Bible** or an icon, or another symbol that unifies the participants.
- The same “**prayer sheet**” is given to each person.
- Each person takes **personal time** to pray and/or reflect in silence.
- The **instructions** for spiritual conversation are given to everyone.
- **Small group** sharing.
- **Plenary session** sharing.
- **Prayer**, singing or **celebration** to conclude.

You will find many of these elements in more detail on the following pages.

²⁵ See n° 230-237 in the Exercises: « Contemplation to open oneself to Love »: love is a reciprocal communication, one gives to the other who receives.

The Facilitating team

Always be at least **two persons** to facilitate/accompany²⁶, and if possible, **a man and a woman**, with as much diversity as possible concerning experience, nationality, state of life, temperament, talents...

Why?

- To benefit from the **complementarity** that exists when there are different psychological types in the discernment process²⁷.
- So that the discernment will be more **communal**, because of the varied origins of those who accompany.
- To be more **credible**: the team practices what it preaches: communal discernment.
- **To avoid abuse of power**²⁸ and to prevent individualism²⁹.
- To make a time of **formation** out of the experience of facilitating together – where each one teaches the other.
- To signify as man and woman³⁰, that our complementarity is in the **image of the persons of the Trinity**, who make important decisions by discerning together³¹.
- Because the Church of our millennium is a **Church of the laity**³².

²⁶ More if the group is very large.

²⁷ It is to their benefit that facilitators make use of exercises that indicate their psychological type (MBTI) : <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/>

²⁸ See- Mt 18: 10 “Do not scandalize, nor disrespect any of these little ones”.

²⁹ Jesus sent his disciples out two by two (Lk 10: 1). He promised, “...if two or three of you come together as a community and discern clearly about anything, My Father in heaven will bless that discernment. (Mt 1: 19).

³⁰ Gen 2: 18.

³¹ Gen 1: 26 and SE 107.

³² The first sentence of Decree 13 of the 34th General Congregation of the Jesuits in 1995. The text begins like this in n° 1: « The realisation of their vocation, in varied and numerous situations, has become a privileged manner by which the People of God exercise his ministry in the world working for the coming of the Kingdom (...) N° 1 concludes by saying that the Society of Jesus is committed to collaborate with lay persons in their ministry.

The prayer sheet

- **The goal:** to help each one to begin from the same place.
- Every prayer sheet is to be prepared before the retreat, but during the retreat, it is to be adapted, or even replaced if necessary.
- Examples of prayer sheet can be found in Chapter V.
- It is possible to initiate spiritual conversation other than with a prayer sheet. With a game, for example (cf. chapter VI).

TITLE : Summarizes the prayer sheet.

Text A Gospel passage, or other reference from scripture, a charter of the group ...

Image The image calls upon the imagination, it evokes symbolic representation, like, for example, while looking at the Roublev icon of the Trinity we can imagine a spiritual conversation at the heart of the Trinity. Ask retreatants to imagine themselves present at this conversation.

A short video can, upon occasion, be very useful.

I ask for what I want and desire (SE 48). This supposes two things: that we desire³³ something... and that we are asking for it from above³⁴.

Guidelines for prayer: for example:

1. I read the text and allow the words to enter me, to spread through me.
2. What relationship is there between this text and my personal experience; the experience of the group?
3. What feelings am I experiencing at present; agreeable or disagreeable? What are my needs: satisfied or unsatisfied?

Conversation with God

I imagine a dialogue with God. What would He say to me? What would I respond?
Would it be a request? A thank you?

- God: ...

- Me: ...

Conclusion I briefly note what I will share with the group concerning the fruit of my personal prayer.

³³ This is the 4th point of Non Violent Communication (NVC). The request concerning our needs, our desires, our yearnings (3rd point of NVC). God begins by making us desire what He wants to give us.

³⁴ What we ask for is the grace, the gift that is appropriate for our specific need at this particular stage where we are, here and now (Lk 11: 9-12), it is the gift of the Spirit (Lk: 11, 13).

Small groups

Why small groups?

The goal of creating small groups is to increase the dynamism and the vitality of the process. Everyone has a chance to speak in small groups of 5 or 6 persons and this increases mutual confidence. « But », some people might object, « we don't know what is being said in the other groups ». We have to make the distinction between two functions of the groups.

- During the first meetings of small groups in the retreat, people get to know one another. The sharing is very intimate. The role of the plenary sessions is to report on the *manner* in which the sharing took place, and not on the details of the content.
- Afterwards, the small groups will be asked to produce a short document containing the fruit of their sharing which will be presented to everyone at the plenary session.

When the group is larger than 8 or 9 people, it is good to create small groups.

Ingredients for small groups

- 4-7 members
- When you are creating small groups, during the plenary session explain to everyone that the groups were composed with the objective of as much diversity as possible:
 - women/men
 - back-grounds
 - languages
 - ages
 - cultures
 - states of life (lay persons, religious, priests...)
 - religious convictions or not religious convictions.
- Sometimes small groups can be created haphazardly just by having people count off:
1, 2, 3, 4, 5 / 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.....
- In the centre of each small group place: a **feather**; a candle and small icon if available.

Small groups of two or three persons

According to the situation, for example, in order to respond to a question asked by one of the facilitators, it can be useful in a plenary session to ask people, without moving from their chairs, to share for a few minutes in groups of 2 or 3. This increases the participation of everyone.



Guidelines for Spiritual Conversation

For group members

1. Choose someone to be **the timekeeper** (See below)
2. **Listen** attentively. Try to detect what is being said over and beyond the words.
3. **Welcome** what is said with gratitude. **Do not condemn.** Each person is the **expert** on his or her own experience.
4. When speaking, take the **feather**³⁵. While you are holding it, the others are silent.
5. Share what you can, and what you **want** to share.
6. **To not agree** is also OK (not to be expressed until the 2nd round of sharing!).
7. Share **briefly** and **clearly**.
8. The small group is **not the place** to resolve individual problems.
9. Times of **silence** are appropriate and necessary.
10. Respect what is **confidential**.
11. Use **“I” when speaking**; do not use “we” or “you”.

For the timekeeper

Before the group begins:

- Tell everyone **at what time the group will stop**,
- Remind them that there will be **at least two rounds of sharing**,
- Say **how much time**, approximately, each one will have for sharing during the 1st round,
- Tell them that you will give a **small signal with your hand** to let them know when their time is almost finished.

The three rounds of sharing

First round. One at a time, each person takes the feather and shares the fruit of his/her prayer. The others listen attentively.

Then, take a moment of silent reflection to ask myself certain questions, such as, « What agreeable or disagreeable feelings do I have ? » ; « What are my satisfied and unsatisfied needs ? » “And the others, what are their agreeable or disagreeable feelings? What are their satisfied or unsatisfied needs?” « When did I feel in harmony with the others?”» « In opposition? » « Are there certain things that have become more clear for me, for the group? » « What are the inevitable consequences of what has been expressed? ».

Second round. Whoever wishes to, takes the feather and shares the fruits of this moment of silent reflection. This will be followed by a time of open and spontaneous conversation between everyone.

Third round. Conversation and thanksgiving together with the Lord

³⁵ A legacy from « Word circles » of the North American Indians.

Plenary Sessions

The plenary sessions mirror the role of the encounter between the one giving the Exercises (here it is the facilitating team) and the one who is receiving the Exercises (the large group with all the participants) (SE 1-20). It is an exercise that is lived together, facilitators and participants, during which each one gives and receives.

To have a **dynamic plenary** session, the facilitators must be attentive to the following:

- in order to write the prayer sheets, ask yourselves these questions:
 - what are our precise expectations during the plenary? What will be the principle style of the plenary? (see below),
 - what question, precise and at the same time open, will we ask in the plenary³⁶?
- during the plenary,
 - ask everyone to express themselves in a **concise manner**; or, announce the time given for each part of the plenary. When someone has spoken in a brief and striking fashion, point it out as a very helpful ;
 - pay attention that everyone continues to be ready to give a **favorable interpretation** on what others say; help them remain attentive to **feelings and needs**, theirs as well as those of the others; help them to remain focused on observed facts, to formulate concrete requests and to be precise and detailed when saying thank you.

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF PLENARY SESSIONS

Bible sharing

In a plenary session, before giving out the “prayer sheet”, give everyone a small piece of paper with the bible text that is on the prayer sheet. Take 30 minutes for a time of sharing on this text. This will enhance the communal appropriation of the bible message.

³⁶ Examples of questions to ask :

- ✓ « In the small group, What have I heard, become aware of? »
- ✓ « What emerged during the second round of sharing in your small group?
- ✓ « Was the grace obtained that you had asked for? »
- ✓ « Did the questions on the prayer sheet help you? »
- ✓ « What became more clear? (concerning a certain question)»
- ✓ « What are the inevitable consequences of what we are now saying? »...



Bible drama

The facilitator will ask the participants to act out the scene of a bible text. Before beginning, take the time for each person who has volunteered for one of the roles, to explain why he/she chose that particular role. After the action, take a time of sharing about what happened. This is a good introduction to Ignatian contemplation: see the persons, listen to what they say; look at what they are doing (SE 106-108; 121-125).

Continuation

The plenary is a continuation, all together, of the *spiritual conversation* which began with the personal prayer between each person and God, then in the small group. The facilitator will invite those who wish, without giving a long, detailed account, to share what touches them most, right here and right now. It is a « **repetition** » in the sense that Ignatius gives to this term in the Exercises (cf. SE 62, 64, 118). Together, everyone deepens, opens up and savours that which most solicits the sentiments.

Reporting

Here, each small group is invited, using a sheet of flip chart paper, to present the fruits of their sharing as well as the consensus that emerged. A representative of the group will make the presentation to the plenary. At the end of the presentation, the other members of the group are invited to add to, or give more detail about a particular point or other. Having listened to all of the groups, the next step will be to bring out the elements of consensus present in the plenary group.

Taking the pulse of the group

The facilitator helps the group to put words on their feelings and their needs. (See chapter II).

A way to start, or a game

The facilitator needs sometimes to have a « way to start » for entering into the meeting time, or a game that would provide an experience of communication in a fun way. (See the end of this chapter and chapter VI).

Spontaneous prayer

Participants are invited to pray out loud or lead a song. This fills the function of the « colloquy » in the Exercises (SE 54).

How to do it?

- ✓ Traditionally, the plenary does not last more than **an hour**. It could be shorter if there has been, for example, a time of intimate sharing in the small groups concerning our graced histories. It could go past an hour if the discussions are contributing to making some concrete decisions.
- ✓ Ask the **question** that the team has prepared. Verify that everyone understands.

- ✓ If a conversation begins to go on and on between just a few participants, you can intervene with, “This conversation concerns a specific theme. Certain people have already had the opportunity to express themselves. Does the group want to continue with this theme? Are there others who would like to say something about this subject? Or would you rather change the subject? ».
- ✓ If what is being expressed in the group reveals that most people are in agreement, you can ask, « Would someone like to express **a different opinion, another idea?** »
- ✓ If there is a lot of digression during the discussion, **remind people of the question** that was proposed for the plenary session, make it more precise, if necessary.
- ✓ It is always important to **invite those to speak who have not yet said anything**.
- ✓ Be attentive not only to what is being said, but also to what is going on in the group: the tone of voice, **attitudes**, expressions on people’s faces, noises,...
- ✓ When useful, **take the pulse** of the group. (See chapter II)
- ✓ To increase and deepen discussion, ask the participants to share about the question in **groups of two or three** for a few minutes.
- ✓ Suggest that participants express themselves with **a drawing**, an image, a symbol, a gesture....
- ✓ When the participants are no longer listening to one another, or, the conversation becomes aggressive, ask participants to use **the feather**, or possibly, suggest a moment of **silence**, or a **pause** (during which the facilitators can get together).

Celebrations

Why speak about celebrations in a chapter devoted to spiritual conversation? Because celebration is to the plenary³⁷ session what the “3rd round of sharing”³⁸ is to the small group: a conversation in which everyone together speaks to God.

Eucharists

Often, the Eucharists provide a rhythm to the retreat. It is important that they are not just habitual. It is an occasion to be imaginative by establishing a creative connection between the Eucharist and what has been lived beforehand. It is the responsibility of the facilitators to reflect on the Eucharists by asking a few questions:

- What do we want to celebrate? How can everyone participate?
- Will there be a homily or a sharing around the Word? Spontaneous intentions? A particular significant gesture? Which Eucharistic prayer? At communion, will participants receive the body and the blood of Christ?
- What songs? Who will lead them? Who will play musical instruments? Who will bring song books?
- Where will we celebrate and why? In the chapel? In the room where the plenary sessions are held? Outside?
- Who will be the principle celebrant?

³⁷ See p. 10.

³⁸ See p. 5.



- Who will make the necessary preparations (bread, wine...)?

It is often appropriate to have distinct styles of Eucharist: more simple celebrations during the morning hours, for example, and more festive ones at midday or in the evening.

A communal reconciliation celebration

A communal reconciliation celebration is always a **key moment** during the retreat. It was **all together** that the disciples had an experience of reconciliation. It was all together that they received the Breath of Jesus, the Holy Spirit that gave them new life, a new birth. (John 20: 20)

Personally receiving the sacrament of penance is not the primary goal, even if it could be good to propose this at another time, or even during, the communal celebration.

Often, the reconciliation celebration does not fit into the retreat before the 3rd day.

There needs to be time for things to happen within the participants.

The team needs to be creative in proposing celebrations that will be significant. For example, ask each participant to **bring a symbol** that will represent his/her desire for reconciliation and conversion.



Starting plenary sessions – Ways and games

It is possible and sometimes even necessary to begin the spiritual conversation in a manner other than a “prayer sheet”.

At the beginning of a retreat, when the participants might not yet know one another, give everyone a pen and paper. Ask them to draw six boxes on their sheet of paper. In the first box, they will write “the name that I wish to be called is:...” In the second box: « One of my favorite biblical characters is: In the third box: « I like: ... ». In the fourth: « I don't like: ... ». In the fifth: « I come from: ... ». In the sixth: « I am going to: ... ». For five minutes, ask the participants to share in pairs on what they have written. When you give the signal, everyone will change partners and share again for five minutes. This can be done another two or three times. This is also a way to pass the time during which most of the participants have arrived but others are still on their way. After this time of sharing, put the sheets of paper up on the wall. This way everyone can be aware of what the others have shared – another starting point for other spiritual conversations.

In the invitation letter, you can ask participants to bring an object that they will use to present themselves... to express where they are right now in their life... to be a visual representation of their expectations...

When beginning an ESDAC session with members of a group that already know one another, you can give them paper and coloured pens and ask them to draw the « state » in which the group is, in their opinion, right now. Afterwards, invite each person to explain his/her drawing. The drawings are then placed on the floor in the centre of the circle of participants. This is a gift that each one gives to whole group.

You can begin the day by asking participants to walk in silence around the plenary session room... then begin looking at one another... then signal hello to one another will still walking....

During a plenary session, ask one of the participants to lead some stretching exercises, or other physical movements, or chi gong, dance steps... with or without movements.

Look at examples of games on Chapter VI (Fifteen questions, the Spielkroll, Crossing the knot)

Here is another activity that is even more pertinent because later on it will be part of an evaluation and discernment. Ask the questions: “What agreeable or disagreeable feelings have we experienced? What need has been, or has not been satisfied? How do we proceed from here on?”

III. DISCERNING COMMUNAL ACTION

The history line

A biblical perspective

That same day, two other disciples are traveling the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. As they walk along, they talk back and forth about all that has transpired during recent days. While they're talking, discussing, and conversing, Jesus catches up to them and begins walking with them (Lk 24: 13-15).

*

The history line is a method of reviewing the past that helps to prepare for new actions that will be undertaken in the future.

A history line can have several different effects on the group:

- ✓ it can reveal the **active presence of the Spirit**, and in so doing, clarify the identity, vocation and mission of the group,
- ✓ it invites us to **give praise** to the Lord for all that has been given; to **ask pardon** for our failings, and to **offer the best of ourselves** in order to do better in the future.
- ✓ it can assist in the **inclusion of new members** into the group.

A large band of paper is attached to the wall and a horizontal line is drawn on it. Certain dates are placed on the line. Everyone's chairs are placed in a semi-circle facing the band of paper.

1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015

The first prayer sheet is entitled, « **The historical events that have been decisive for our group** »³⁹. The presentation of the prayer sheet is followed by a time of personal prayer, and, if it seems useful, there can be time in small groups.

In the plenary session, the facilitators give each person three yellow post-its and a pen. They ask each one to write an event on each post-it that seemed decisive for the group. They remind everyone to only write down the facts, without any interpretation of them (the interpretations will come in the following exercise). Then; each person is invited to come forward, stick the post-its on the band of paper, read what has been written and give a brief commentary on why. The facilitator will then initiate a time of spiritual conversation concerning the facts. The most important thing is not what is written, but **what is happening between the participants**.

A second prayer sheet is given: « **The feelings related to the decisive events in our history** »⁴⁰. The presentation of the prayer sheet is followed by a time of personal prayer, and again, if useful, a time in small groups. In the plenary session the facilitator gives each participant three green post-its and three red post-its. The facilitator explains, «On the green post-its indicate your agreeable emotions. On the red post-its, indicate your disagreeable emotions ». All of the participants are invited to come forward together in silence and stick their post-its next to the events they pertain to. Afterwards, everyone takes time to contemplate in silence what appears on the history line. Then, the facilitator invites those who wish, to say what they would like to share with the group. This is similar to the “second round” of spiritual conversation.

During the plenaries, it can be useful to have **one or so, repetitions** (SE 62) of these exercises: to come back to the events that provoked several agreeable and disagreeable emotions in the past, and above, all those actually present during the plenary session.

Next, the facilitators will invite the group to pray and reflect over the « **Satisfied needs and unsatisfied needs** »⁴¹ and « **the moments of darkness and the moments of light in our history** ». **Sometimes a prayer sheet will be used for this exercise**, sometimes not. It depends on what seems most appropriate for the group at the time.

All the moments of darkness are noted on a sheet of flip chart paper and all the moments of light on another. Ask the group to name the three most important moments of light, and do the same for the most significant moments of darkness. This will prepare the group for the exercise « **My personal complicity with darkness and sin** » (See chapter IV).

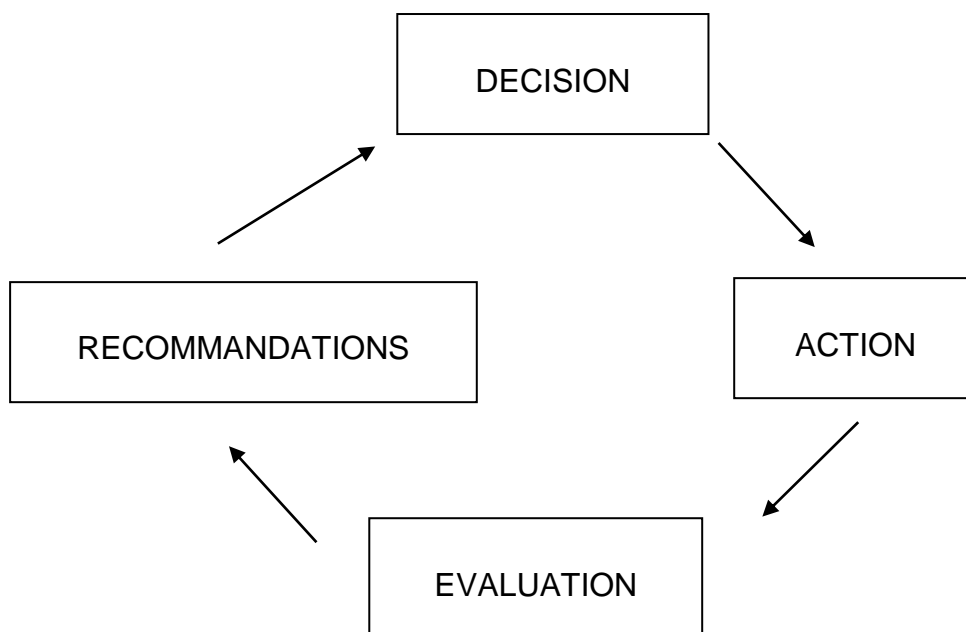
These exercises can take two or three days and finish with a **communal celebration of reconciliation** (See chapter II).

³⁹ The plain facts, with no evaluation or interpretation of them. In Non Violent Communication, this is the first of four steps. The three others are: feelings (sensations, sentiments), needs/aspirations/desires, requests and thank you.

⁴⁰ The 2nd step of NVC.

⁴¹ The 3rd step of NVC.

The « Energy and Power » cycle



ACTION = activity, acts, reactions, doing, actions to implement the decision.

EVALUATION = reviewing, debriefing, examining, awareness, reflection, stopping to examine previous actions⁴²

RECOMMENDATIONS = suggestions, propositions, ideas for future action. The fruit of prayer and brainstorming.

DECISION = «What recommendation(s) will we choose to implement – put into action?⁴³».

⁴² This can be an activity that lasted 3 minutes, an hour, a day, a month, a year or the history of the group from the time of its foundation.

⁴³ When the sense of the choice leads toward the Holy Spirit, it is an « election » in the sense that what has been chosen is the option « elected » by God.



Reflections on the energy and power cycle

All humans are driven by an **energy** that compels them to contribute to life, to care for it, to enhance it, the life of others and their own. This is the most vivid manifestation of divine energy and divine power that is within us all.

We find the word “power” on electric appliances next to the words « on » and « off ». At certain moments in a group, the current is not flowing. At other moments, the group is highly charged. At other moments, the group uses its energy and power of action in a calm and serene manner.

The Holy Spirit is the « divine energy of love » that the group receives when it stays **connected** with the divine source, or when it reconnects with it. It then has new life, new momentum and vitality. The members of the group are interconnected with one another, present to one another, bringing forth from each one, and offering to everyone, the best of their selves.

As we are using the word here, **power means** « the capacity to react, to evaluate, to make recommendations, to decide and to influence ».

As it was created and given by God, power **is a good thing**. As such, we are to ask God for it: it gives **life**.

The power is in the group! Even in a group that has a leader, and even if the leader has been named by a legitimate authority (even a religious authority), the **power lies in the group!**

Who has the power in the group? **Each person in the group has the power** to decide, to act, to evaluate and make recommendations. Each person has the capacity to influence the others and to be influenced by them. Even a newborn exercises power over its parents! **Power is not limited to the capacity to decide.**

All humans have the power to become more authentically themselves and grow in humanity. They have the power to decide, in conscience, according to the inclination of reason, ethics or the Holy Spirit. And they have the power to oppose, in conscience, decisions that are contrary to reason, ethics or inclination of the Holy Spirit.

But everyone also has the power to play the game of the « bad spirit », to allow themselves to be seduced and finish by being less human. Human freedom can use power badly. The manner in which we use it requires **vigilance** and **evaluation**.

A group that does not correctly **evaluate** its actions, finishes by dying.

A group has power over its **environment**.

In terms of ideas, experience and all sorts of capacity and resources, a **group possesses**, for better or for worse, **a much greater power** than a simple individual.

The two opposing **temptations** for every member of a group are abuse of power and resignation. **Abuse of power** consists in taking the power that belongs to someone else



(the leader, others, God). **Resignation** consists of giving up the power that belongs to us (that we receive from the leader, or from others, or from God).

When we were infants and we were faced with abuse of power, the only way that we could assure our survival was through resignation. Now that we are adults, our goal is no longer survival but to live fully: **we must resist abuse of power** and dare courageously to exercise our own power.

When doing the exercise of the «history line » or a « review », we turn our attention to **the past** in order to evaluate past actions. When we move to recommendations, we turn toward the **future** and we prepare the decisions to be taken by sharing our expectations, our dreams and our desires.

God with His Devine Power of Love is a work in our personal dreams and in our deepest desires, as well as in the deepest and truest desires of the group. This is true even if certain illusions and caprices are also hidden in our dreams...

The purpose of the Power Cycle is to help us become conscious of what we are not aware of, or not enough aware of.

The energy and power of a group is linked directly to the members **freely choosing to commit themselves** in efforts to achieve a goal which they themselves have freely chosen and adopted.

When we take the initiative to make recommendations and suggestions to someone in authority, we also need to say **to what extent we are prepared to commit personally** to the actions that will be necessary to implement our recommendations.

Charism - « Name of grace » and « Identity-Vocation-Mission »

Saint Francis of Assisi is known as « the poor man ».

This is what we call his « name of grace » or his « charism ».

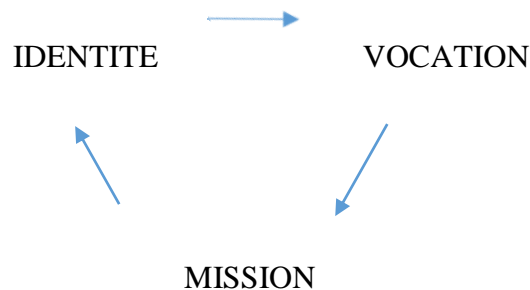
It is the name that expresses his identity, his vocation, his mission.

To be poor is his identity.

To be a witness and a sign of poverty is his mission in the world.

He received his vocation when he kissed the man with leprosy and when he put on the clothes of a beggar. He received the grace of conversion.

The dynamic « **IDENTITY** ↔ **VOCATION** ↔ **MISSION** » is **interactive**⁴⁴ :



To have a good idea of my name of grace is very important for personal discernment.

When I need to make a decision, I ask, « Will this be consistent with my name of grace, with my charism, with the reason that I am here on earth? ».

What is the Name of Grace of Therese of Lisieux⁴⁵ ?

What is the Name of Grace of Charles de Foucault⁴⁶ ?

What is the Name of Grace of Pope Francis⁴⁷ ?

And the Name of Grace of Saint Ignatius? Probably: « Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam – For the greater glory of God ». The Name of Grace is linked to conversion⁴⁸, to the grace received in order to become our true selves. Saint Ignatius received the grace that enabled him to combat throughout his life against his vainglory which threatened to prevent him from being truly and deeply free.

What is the Name of Grace of our Lord Jesus?

Probably: « Son ».

At His baptism by John, Jesus received the gift of the Spirit for us, for our conversion, so that we might be transformed into the beloved children of the Father⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ This charism, or Name of Grace, is received from experiences, history, trials and error, a review of our life, through prayer, spiritual conversation, our deepest aspirations, discerning the Spirit and action.

⁴⁵ Infant... Love... etc...

⁴⁶ Nazareth... Brother to all...

⁴⁷ Mercy... Eligendo et miserando...

⁴⁸ The Name of Grace, or charism, is the deep meaning of our life, the unique sense of our existence. It is our struggle to pass from death to life .

⁴⁹ The inspiration of this chapter comes from Herbert Alfonso: *Discovering Your Personal Vocation: The Search for Meaning Through the Spiritual Exercises*, Paperback, 2001.



Groups and communities also have a Name of Grace.

For the L'Arche communities of Jean Vanier it is: « Relationship – Transformation – Sign », or, in other words: reciprocal relationships⁵⁰ which transform us and become a sign for others.

For the Trappists of Tibhirine: « We are those who pray among those who pray.⁵¹ ».

Knowing our communal Name of Grace is fundamental for discerning a communal action, for « feeling » together, for arriving at a consensus.

The life of a group is in direct relation to the efforts of each member to act in accordance with his Name of Grace AND to be in accord with the Name of Grace of the other members. It is the Spirit that achieves this congruence.

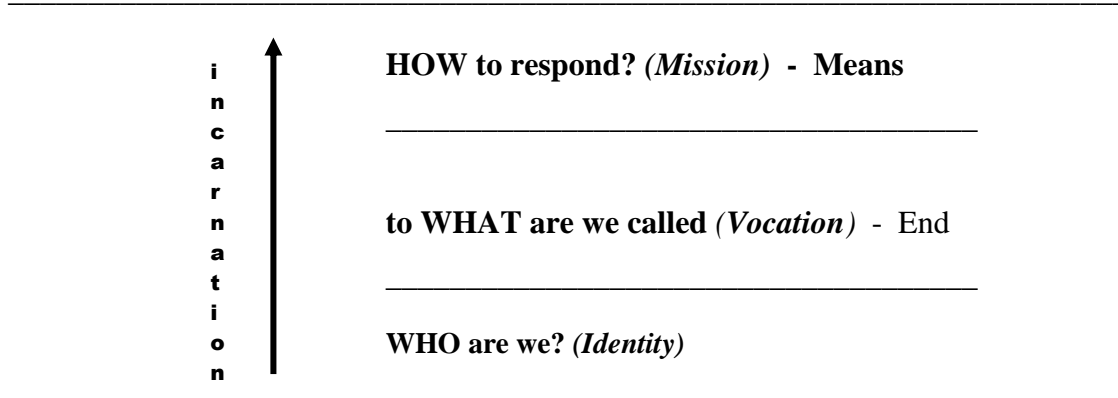
Look at the exercise in Chapter V: « My areas of freedom and non-freedom » and « My image of God ».

⁵⁰ Between very fragile persons and others.

⁵¹ Prayerful Christians among prayerful Muslims.

« Who-What-How » clarifying « Identity-Vocation-Mission »

The three levels of spiritual conversation



"Identity-vocation-mission" corresponds to three levels of questioning, from the most fundamental to the most concrete. The three levels are interrelated because we discover « who we are » (level 1), when we employ concrete means (level 3) to respond to the call (level 2) that we have felt.

1. Identity = Who am I? It is the most profound level, the most universal and the most general. As a human being, **I am someone who desires to contribute to life, that of others and my own.** This is the most universal formulation. This supposes that to live together demands that I be concerned about the others, and that they are concerned about me. This corresponds to the Gospel precept, "Do unto others as I would have them do unto me." Christians (the identity becomes more precise), see traces of the Trinity in this text. They know that they are created in the image of God, and at the heart of the Trinity, each Person is concerned about the other, takes care of the other. This is what Love is about. And God is Love.

2. Vocation = to what am I called? = what are **my deepest desires**, my greatest aspirations, "my most farfetched dreams". What would I like to make of my life today, To have made of my life on the day of my death? Someone once said, "You will never fulfill the dreams that you did not permit yourself to have". We can have a vocation to be a teacher, or nurse, or researcher... ("vocare" in Latin = to call). It is something that one feels inside: an attraction, an aspiration to contribute to life, of oneself and others in a particular manner. For the person of faith, it is God who calls us, who puts this particular aspiration in our heart... In order to give us something, God begins by giving us the desire for it.

3. Mission = how to respond? = what **concrete means** to use in order to respond to this call, to live out my wildest dreams? As the years go by, the means can change and evolve, but it is still the same dream, only being lived out in another way. For example, my dream could be to educate young people. The means could be by teaching, or facilitating trainers, or making educational videos on internet...

When we begin to lack clarity on level 3, it is important to begin our questioning on level 2. I don't know any longer whether I want to make educational videos or facilitate trainers. But am I still called to educate young people?

If I no longer know what I am called to on level 2, I return to level 1 and ask myself, "In contributing to the life (the joy, the happiness, the well-being) of others, do I contribute enough to my own? Or, in contributing to my own life and well-being, am I contributing enough to the life of others?"

Reflections on Who-What-How? Identity-Vocation-Mission

On a worksite in the Middle Ages, everyone was busy. A stranger came by and asked one of the workers: « What are you doing? – I'm pushing a wheelbarrow ». The stranger came to another worker and asked the same question, « What are you doing? – I am making my living. » To a third worker the stranger asked, «What are you doing »? And this one responded, « We are building a cathedral. »

*

It is essential to **distinguish between what is happening and what is really going on**. What is happening is that nations are at war and making peace. Individuals are being born and die, being married, being given in marriage, being sold, bought, laughing and crying. What is really going on is that on a deeper level the Father is forming the Body of the Son. (SE 106).

Life is the incarnation of an infinitely divine plan in a small limited edition.

- **The level of « who are we? »** is the deepest, the most profound. It is the level of our seminal **experience**, of our creation, of our gifts and talents. We are children of God.
- **The level of « To what are we called? »** and also the level of **desires** and **dreams**, of **goals** and **vision**.
- **The level of « How to respond to the call? »** concerns **the action plan**, the means in terms of **personnel, finances, time, place...measurable objectives**.

When difficulties arise for a couple or a group that has been formed in response to a call from God, even if they were not clearly conscious of it, remember that **the consensus is already in the couple or the group!** Consensus cannot be produced with an iron fist. It is to be discovered, like a treasure hidden in a field. As facilitators, our work is to help the couple, or group, to dig down to the level where the consensus is present.

Very often, it is **on the level of HOW that conflicts arise** in a community, a couple or a team... This is often due to the fact that very little time has been consecrated to spiritual conversation on the level of WHAT and WHO.

One of the major needs and challenges: **DEEPENING** - Abandoning superficiality.

When there is no consensus at one level, go down to the level below. If there is no consensus on the level of HOW, look for it on the level of WHAT. If there is still no consensus, go to the level of WHO.

It is never the ultimate purpose of a Christian group to operate a school, or university, or hospital, or social centre or a spiritual retreat house... **The ultimate purpose is to serve God and Man**, to serve Jesus Christ that we recognize in our littlest brothers and sisters.

The call comes from **the needs** of the world and the environment. The desire of God is to respond to the needs of humanity. This is the same desire as that of our heart. Calls, desires and needs, all come together.

Statements of identity (« We are... »), **of vocation** (« Called to... » **and mission** (« Our mission is to... ») are very short statements, easy to remember and are to be adapted regularly. The conciseness assures power, light and unity.



Spiritual discernment allows us to verify whether the concrete decisions to be taken are in harmony with our most recently adapted statements of identity, vocation and mission.

Grace is the force of the Holy Spirit that is given to us in order to fulfill our **own** mission, not the mission of another group!

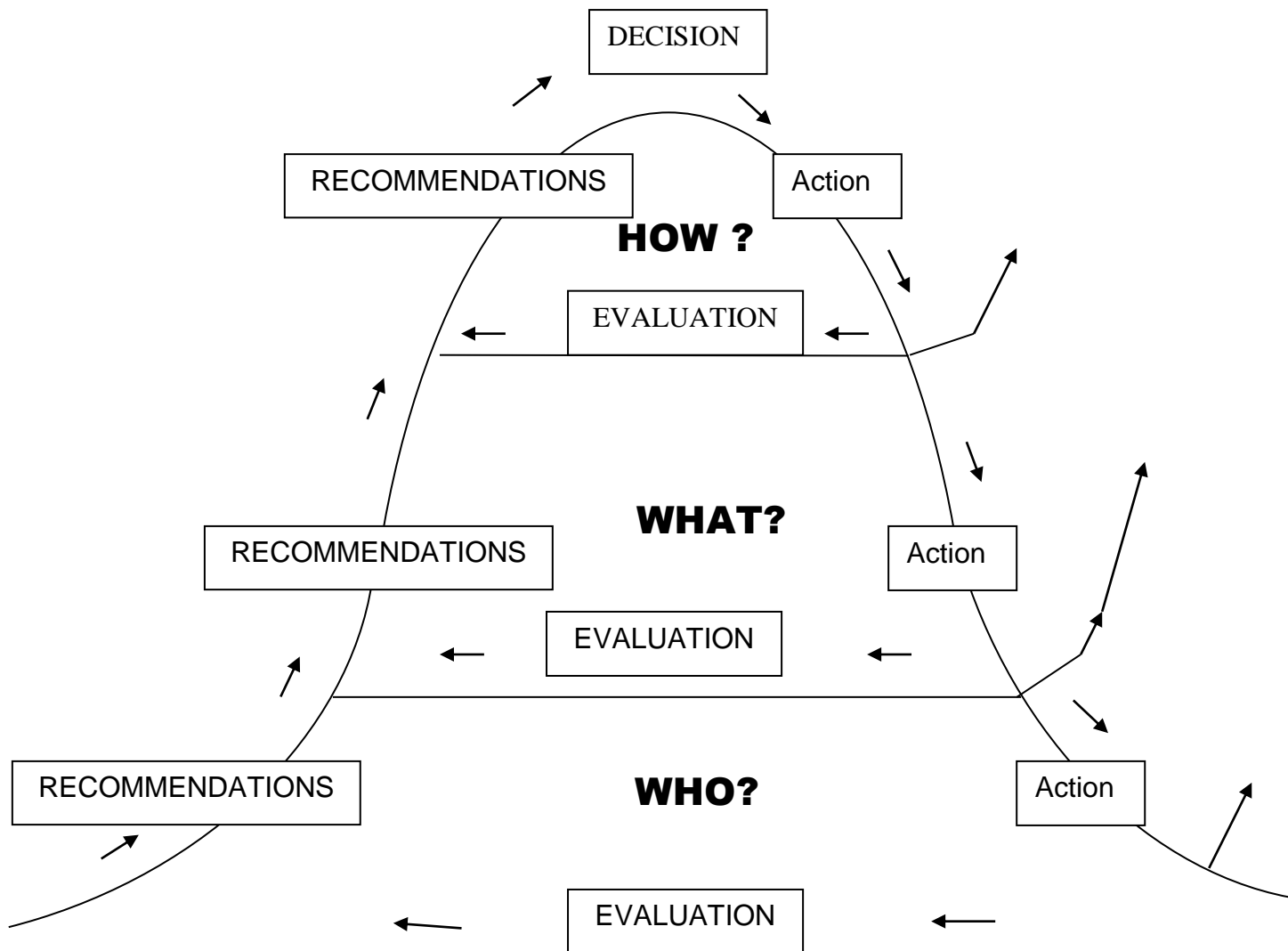
Discerning carefully and seriously to what we are called today, and responding even more generously, opens us increasingly to the inspiration and the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Our identity is not found in documents like the Bible, or constitutions, or charter or a Rule of Life... it is found in **our concrete experience** in relationship to these documents.

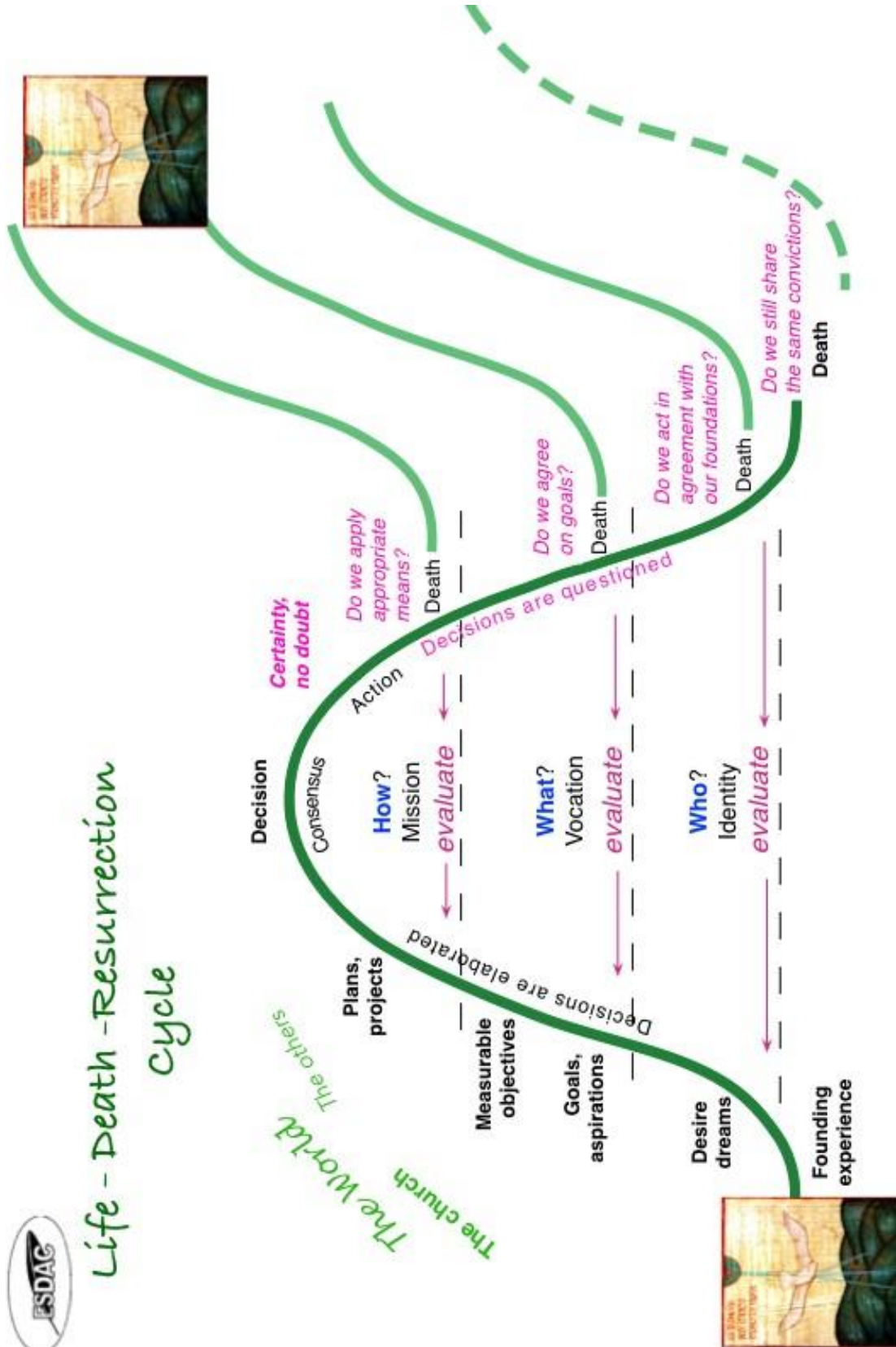
Spiritual conversation concerning these experiences gives us a common language, a common culture and often, even a common jargon that everyone in the group understands.

« Life-Death-Resurrection » Cycle

The world and its needs



The world and its needs



Reflections on the «Life-Death-Resurrection» Cycle

« Nobody puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skin too! » (Mark 2: 22).

*

The world in which the group lives is changing. New environments develop as well as new cultures and new ways of seeing and understanding. Old ways disappear. Needs change.

The people who belong to the group change. They get older... and perhaps wiser! New members arrive. Older members die. Certain people choose to leave the group. The power of the group over its environment changes.

Life is change, transformation, evolution, adaptation to a new environment, loss of past forms of power and acquisition of new ones.

Life follows a cycle: « Life-Death-Resurrection ». It is the law of all life: *« ...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit »* (John 12: 24). It is in obeying this law that Jesus leads Humanity to its completion.

The purpose of community discernment is to **enable the groups to be free and available** in order to be able to renounce means that have become obsolete and adopt those that are more suitable to the new conditions, new cultures and new needs (Cf. SE 23).

Since life is change, the group will inevitably experience highs and lows. There will be crises, **questioning and doubts**, more or less serious, concerning Who/What/How.

Certain challenges and questions concern **Identity**: “Who are we really? Because everything changes, what is left of our deepest identity? » Certain questions concern our **vocation**: « To what are we called now? » Certain questions concern our **mission**: «How to respond to the new needs today, with the strength that we have... and the strength we no longer have? » New responses are given. A new life begins: it is the resurrection...

The more a group reviews and retells the history of its foundation, the more it becomes **free from HOW** the history began and free to choose **HOW** this history should continue.

Habitually, what permits a system to evolve is its **weakness**. A perfect system rapidly becomes too rigid.

Every difficult situation hides an interior force that is not readily visible, but carries the **seeds of hope**, if we take the time to carefully observe without prejudgments.

Rational criteria⁵² for discerning the hierarchy of the calls

1. We bring to memory our **Names of Grace** (Identity-Vocation- Mission), that of our group as well as our own Names of Grace (See chapter II).
2. We become aware of our common longing to **contribute to life⁵³**,
 - a. that of others AND our own,
 - b. in particular that of persons in the greatest distress⁵⁴,
 - c. to do so with compassion and competence,
 - d. taking into account our resources in terms of persons, materiel means, AND our confidence in Providence.
3. Between two possibilities that respond in equal fashion to our Names of Grace and our desire to contribute to life, give preference to:
 - a. that which responds most **urgently** while in the same time weighing the concerns of the long term⁵⁵,
 - b. that which responds most to the **needs, desires, aspirations** that are most **in relationship to the heart and the spirit**, while keeping in mind the material and corporal needs, desires and aspirations,
 - c. that which helps the **persons who assume the most important responsibilities**, without neglecting those who have no responsibility.
 - d. that which **the others have not responded to**. This implies being ready to **withdraw when the other can replace us**. In this way, we are available and free for new tasks.

⁵² The ration criteria concern « the needs », as they have been defined in chapter I. They have been previously detected by the « feelings ».

⁵³ See chapter I : our deepest longing

⁵⁴ This takes in the criteria of the « common good », the « universal good », « the preferential option for the poor », the principle according to which there is no announcing of the faith without promotion of justice (Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation of the Jesuits, 1975), the repeated exhortation of Pope Francis to “go to the frontiers”, his exhortation « Evangelii Gaudium, in 2014 » and his encyclical « Laudato Si, in 2015 ».

⁵⁵ For all of this, see the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus.

When and how to weigh the “for” and “against”?

« We were divided in our opinions that varied significantly concerning our statute (...) We decided on the following procedure. The following day, everyone would come prepared to express all possible objections concerning obedience (...) On the next day, we would discuss the other possibility, proposing all of the advantages and all of the fruits of obedience (...) This is how we had our debate (...) weighing and examining the reasons that were the most significant and efficacious, and at the same time continuing our habitual exercises of prayer, meditation and reflection. »⁵⁶

If the discernment of satisfactions and dissatisfactions does not do enough to enlighten the situation, a table like the one below can be used (SE 178-183):

We will move house	
Reason FOR (advantages/benefits)	Reasons AGAINST (disadvantages/dangers)
-	-
-	-
-	-
We will not move house	
Reason FOR (advantages/benefits)	Reasons AGAINST (disadvantages/dangers)
-	-
-	-
-	-

One of the most useful things about this procedure is that **it prevents the group from dividing** into two factions: one side against the other. Because everyone is invited to find reasons for a certain solution, then everyone is invited to find reasons against this solution.

When all of the elements for and against have been given, ask the group to underline those that seem the most important, making use of rational criteria (see below).

When there are only a small number of voices against the proposition, it is important that the group listen attentively to all the reasons against the proposition. Some of the reasons could indicate traps to be avoided, or precautions to take when implementing the decision.

Usually, the result of this type of methodical and rational deliberation must result in a sense of common satisfaction and consolation. The affective criteria developed in Chapter I remain decisive. A feeling, when it is authentic, is received. It is the sign of a gift received from above.

⁵⁶ The method used by Ignatius and his first companions when they took three months to try to know if God was calling them to stay united, as a body, while dispersed in the different missions given to each one. See p. 12 of

<https://books.google.be/books?id=FSdr5vskzWQC&pg=PA12&lpg=PA12&dq=deliberation+of+the+first+fathers&source=bl&ots=mtKXa3E8EZ&sig=yZz5OupGrcG0rniaayWxpDCalRA&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwido6rs8fvJAhVJxRQKHTsSDOMQ6AEIHjAA#v=onepage&q=deliberation%20of%20the%20first%20fathers&f=false>

Advice for the facilitators

1) Take the pulse of the group regularly.

For example, in the plenary, ask each person to respond, one after the other, to the following question with one word or a short sentence, «What are you feeling, right here, right now? »

- a) **Fatigue?** It is important to think about adapting the times of the program and the breaks and pauses. What creates energy is not “to get done as much as possible”, but to take the time to taste and savor what is given to us (SE 2). Remind the members of the group to feel free to take personal time, time for prayer, to spend the breaks and free times as they wish, to take a siesta, a walk, or play a game with others.
- b) **Apathy?**
 - i) Verify that the personal time is being used for personal prayer and reflection, no meetings in groups of two or three (ES 6).
 - ii) To ask the small group: have you chosen a time keeper? Is s/he fulfilling his mission well? Is anyone monopolising the conversation? Are you having at least two rounds of sharing? Are you using the feather? (ES 6).
 - iii) Encourage everyone to struggle against leaving things « unspoken » (Cf. SE 326) by this question, « Ask yourself if what you have been sharing in twos or threes at table, or while walking together, might also be important to share with everyone during the plenary? ».
- c) **Resistance?** (in reference to the current work of the group)
 - i) Say that the decisions that the group has taken will not be changed as long as the group feels that its needs have been satisfied (Cf. SE 318).
 - ii) Be gentle and kind, encourage the group to prepare for life and joy that will surely arrive (SE 7).
- d) **Enthusiasm?** In the case of immense enthusiasm, caution against all unconsidered or hasty commitments (SE 14).

2) And if someone is dissatisfied and the group is satisfied?

After everyone has had a chance to speak, ask the person who had manifested his dissatisfaction, sadness, deception, worry, etc. whether these feelings are in relation to the community process that is going on, or if they come from a personal situation.

- a) If the dissatisfaction comes from a **personal situation** that is clearly identified, the facilitators can ignore it during the plenary sessions. Perhaps one of the facilitators, or a retreatant, can offer to listen to the person after the plenary to provide the support and empathy that the person needs.
- b) If the dissatisfaction includes **anger**, it may be that the present process has awoken an old, personal painful memory. It is possible that the dissatisfied person projects his suffering on the facilitators, or on members of the group. Often, it will suffice for everyone to listen without reacting, remaining calm and connected to the divine



energy of love that keeps us in communion with the person who is suffering. Often, the person needs our empathy and not solutions to his problems.

If the dissatisfaction concerns **the process** that is going on, it will be important to carefully listen to what the person is feeling and trying to say. It may be that the person senses better than the facilitators and the rest of the group what is happening and really going on.

What about the four weeks of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises?

To be read from bottom to top!

I N C A R N A T I O N	↑	<p>Receive confirmation on the matter from one’s life.</p> <p>➤ Internal: Joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>➤ External:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Agreement on the part of the legitimate authority.○ Test of time.	<p><u>How?</u></p> <p>3^d & 4th weeks of SE</p>	F U T U R E
		<p>Receive confirmation of the call by contemplating on the Passion and Resurrection. Choose the concrete means of bringing people’s calls to fruition.</p>		
		<p>If the discernment of the spirits does not shed enough light on the matter, discern by reason with an awareness of the advantages/benefits and the disadvantages/dangers.</p>	<p><u>What?</u></p> <p>2^d week of SE</p>	
		<p>Contemplate the way of Jesus and through the discernment of spirits, receive His call.</p>		
	↑	<p>Become aware of sin and receive mercy. Celebration of reconciliation. (SE: 1st week, Ex. 1, colloquy: Death of Christ and the retreatant. SE: 1st week, Ex. 2, colloquy: Resurrection of Christ and the retreatant.)</p>	<p><u>Who?</u></p> <p>Principle and Foundation 1st week of SE</p>	
	<p>Foundations:</p> <p>Through spiritual conversation, ensure the attitudes of a favourable presupposition, listening and trust. Sharing the sacred history and dreams of each person in the group shows that God is at work in our lives and in the group. (SE: Principle et Foundation: Man is created. Life is given)</p>			

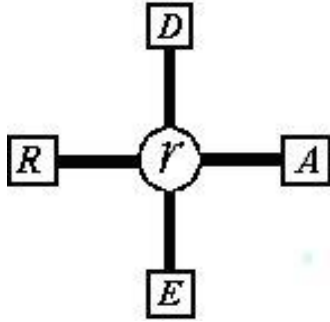
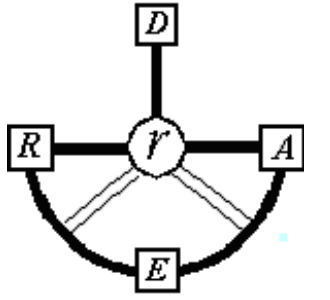
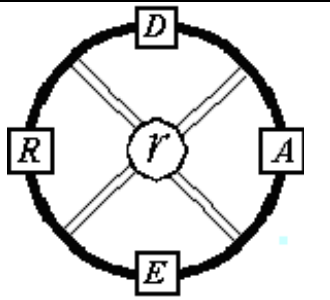


The diagram of ESDAC and the 4 weeks of the SE, shows that the Exercises refer to the Passion and the Resurrection in two places: in the 1st week, and in the 3rd and 4th weeks.

Groups that call on ESDAC are often in situations of tension, conflict, non-communication, injuries and suffering. It can be appropriate to begin, even at the first meeting, with a Gospel text that refers to the death and resurrection of Christ. For example, the story of the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24: 13-35) or the apparition of Jesus in John 20: 19-23. But, wouldn't that immediately introduce the group into the 3rd and 4th weeks, while short circuiting the first week?

No. It is just a way of entering into the first week with the help of Gospel texts that found the Christian faith. When Christ was resurrected, his disciples were « resurrected » with Him (John 20: 20 and Lk 24: 32). They were sad and without hope (Lk 24: 17 & 21) dead and lost (Lk 15: 32) and came to life again, hearts burning with joy. They were reconciled with themselves, between themselves and with God. A new Force was given to them, that of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to foresee the future together with audacity, courage and hope.

Authority - 3 leadership styles - Role of a leader

Group Condition	Needed Style of Leadership	Desired Group Responses
<p>Lack of Identity</p> <p>External or Internal crisis</p> <p>Survival</p>	<p>DIRECTIVE</p> <p>Leader makes decision (evaluation & recommendations) alone.</p> <p>Leader takes decision alone.</p>	 <p>- Acceptance of decision - Cooperation in action</p>
<p>Security</p> <p>Stability</p> <p>Developing a Sense of Identity and Mission</p>	<p>CONSULTATIVE</p> <p>Leader makes decision (evaluation & recommendations) with the members.</p> <p>Leader takes decision alone.</p>	 <p>- Cooperation in evaluating and making recommendations - Acceptance of decision - Responsible action</p>
<p>Mature Sense of Identity and Mission</p> <p>Clear Perception by all of Resources and Limits</p>	<p>FACILITATIVE</p> <p>Leader facilitates decision making and decision is taken by all members.</p>	 <p>-Responsibility and collaboration in all phases of the Power Cycle</p>

A = Action; E = Evaluation; R = Recommendations; D = Decision; r = Leader

Reflections on authority, the 3 leadership styles, and the role of a leader

Texts

« We must obey God rather than human beings! » (Ac 5: 29).

We are bound to obey our conscience, even if it is wrong. But we are bound to seek to enlighten our conscience so that it will not be wrong. (See- Thomas d'Aquin, De Veritate, q. XVII, a. 4).

*

In a group, while it is correct to consider that everyone is responsible, it is none the less usually necessary that someone be designated as « **the** » **leader of the group**. This is the condition that allows a group to be formally recognised as a group⁵⁷.

The one who is formally in charge of the group receives his **legal authority by delegation from a higher authority** or from the group (by democratic election, for example).

The one who is formally in charge of the group receives his **effective authority by delegation from the group**. It comes from his ability to make use of the power, energy and gifts that are present in each of the members of the group. As a consequence, he is confirmed by the group as a good leader.

The leader of the group has five principle responsibilities:

- assure suitable conditions for **spiritual conversation**,
- help the group to **discern where the Holy Spirit is at work**,
- solicit the collaboration of each one during the four phases of **the energy and power cycle**, according to the authority style demanded by the situation,
- ensure coherence with the **identity, vocation and mission** of the group,
- **delegate** in order to insure that all members take responsibility according to their own gifts and talents.

⁵⁷ There are some exceptions. Sometimes a team of three is a good leader...



Legal authority = the right to command. **Effective Authority** = ability to energize, motivate, lead.

The choice of an authority style (directive, consultative, participative) is determined, not by the preferences of the leader, but by the **needs of the group** in a particular situation.

Community discernment not only concerns participative leadership, but also **consultative leadership**.

Whenever it is possible, appropriate, or necessary, it is better to take decisions when everyone has had the possibility to contribute to the **preparation of the decision** (= evaluation + recommendations).

When a group shares and deliberates, **something new emerges** that is more than the simple addition of the individual contributions.

Communal discernment is not a universal cure, or panacea. In certain cases, even when it is not a crisis situation, or a matter of survival, or lack of identity, it is necessary for the leader to take a decision without consulting. This is the case for **decisions of minor importance**. Exceptionally, it is the case of a **decision of major importance**. For example when Saint Peter, witnessing the gift of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his family, felt urged to confer baptism on those who were not Jewish (Ac 10: 47). He acted *without hesitation, or the possibility of hesitation* (SE 175).

The more a leader assumes **responsibility for the group**, the more he needs to delegate. If the leader is too occupied with questions concerning HOW, the members of the group will confirm him in the role of «**problem solver** » and they will bring him more and more problems to resolve.

Every member of the group **also receives a mission by delegation**. This determines who does what, when, where, at what price...

When the leader delegates to someone, he needs to be mindful of:

- remaining responsible and **verifying** that the delegation is carried out correctly,
- **to not take over the reins** of what was delegated to another;

To give a mandate to someone, it is necessary to define:

- The extent and the limits of his authority,
- The procedures to follow,
- The times for evaluation,
- The manner of being accountable,
- The duration of the mandate.

The Father revealed His identity and His authority style by delegating to His Son, to the Spirit, and by bestowing to His creatures... Our limited power comes from the supreme and infinite power from above (SE 237).

How to conduct meetings

- **BEFOREHAND**: Send out the agenda well ahead of time with:
 - an evaluation of past activities
 - recommendations for future activities
 - other items
- **DURING THE MEETING** :
 - A scripture text or something from a Charter or Rule of Life, or other spiritual text...
 - The grace that is being asked for.

- A short time of **spiritual conversation** (20 minutes)
 - What important things have I experienced in the last few days?
 - Where have I seen “Life” (God) at work?

 - Be precise about the time to be given to each item on the agenda.
 - Verify that there is agreement on the minutes from the previous meeting.
 - Begin the agenda.
- **AFTER THE MEETING**: Send the minutes to everyone.
- **FROM TIME TO TIME**: Evaluation + Recommendations
 - What has been good/difficult in our meetings? (= evaluation)
 - How can we improve them? (= recommendations)



IV. ORGANIZING YOUR NEXT COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT SESSION

Program

NB: This is theoretical! No actual session takes place in this way. The team of facilitators has to adapt the program for the group and has to adapt each handout according to what is happening during the session. This includes the presentations, the schedule, etc. Some sessions last one day, others two, three or more. Some take place during everyday life.

It is important for all team members to participate in writing up the preliminary program as part of a team building warm-up.

HO = handout = prayer sheet

	Arrival	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Morning		HO My Deepest Experiences with God	History Timeline HO	History Timeline Presentation (Who-What-How)	History Timeline Presentation (Leadership)
Afternoon		HO My Deepest Desires	History Timeline HO Presentation (Power Cycle)	History Timeline Presentation (Life, Death and Resurrection Cycle)	Celebration of Reconciliation
Evening	Welcome Introductions Begin	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time

	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Departure
Morning	HO Jesus' Call and Way	HO Nazareth	HO Spiritual Struggle	HO Our Answer	
Afternoon	HO Annunciation	HO Public Life	Our Call	Repetition Evaluation	
Evening	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	



Timetable of Arrival and 1st Day

NB: Since we work as a team, it is necessary to plan carefully and in advance who will do what and when! The example of how the team works together is the best “teaching” that it can give to others!

Arrival

15:00 - Participant Reception: **Ania** and her team.

16:00 - Meeting those who have already arrived; ice-breaker exercise, talking in twos for a short time, changing partners, etc.: **Fanny** will meet people, get them motivated and facilitate this exercise.

17:00 - Plenary session.

Ania welcomes the participants, briefly refers to the invitation behind such a session and gives a general view of our purpose during these days.

Presentation from **the team leaders: Fanny and Peter (F/P)**.

Ania gives some recommendations on practical matters (personal needs, finances and the layout of the place). She adds that if there is a problem concerning the way groups have been formed, people may come talk to her.

F/P present:

- The goal of the session as it came to be understood through the request sent to the team.
- The method used: Gospel, personal prayer, small group, plenary session, etc.
- Presentation of **SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION**: Definition of the term and explanation of how to lead a spiritual conversation. **F/P explain**.

18:45 - Supper

20:00 - Plenary Session (20 minutes): Prayer together maybe with a Scripture Text (for example, the disciples of Emmaus) in order to show the central place of God and God's initiative in discernment.

20:30 - Rest



Day 1

07:30 – 08:45 - Breakfast

09:00 - Plenary Session (PS): Song, biblical text + prayer on handout (HO) 1, song.

09:20 - **HO 1 “I am the beloved of God”** Presentation by **F/P**

09:40 - Personal Prayer (PP)

10:40 - Coffee/Tea Break (CB)

11:00 - Plenary Session (PS):

- **Presentation SMALL GROUPS F/P** explain the criteria used in forming the small groups.

- **Instructions to facilitate the Spiritual Conversation** by **F/P**

11:15 - Small Groups (SG)

12:30 - Meal

14:30 - Plenary Session (PS): Conducted by **F/P**: Sharing about small group time this morning; not the content but instead questions like, “How did I live this time?”, “Was I happy or unhappy or ... ?”, “What else?”

15:00 - PS: **HO 2: “My deepest desires”** by **F/P**

15:20 - PP (Personal Prayer)

16:20 - CB (Coffee/Tea Break)

16:40 - SG (Small Group)

17:40 - PS (Plenary Session)

18:10 - Eucharist

18:45 - Meal

20:00 - Rest? Or something else?

- Either have the plenary session during the Eucharist or the Eucharist after the evening meal.

Day 2, etc.



Preparation Checklist

Preparation with those who request a retreat for their group (a very important point!).

What are their requests and expectations? Is there a problem to be solved? Is there a conflict? Is there a common decision to be taken? Or, do they expect above all, a time of spiritual conversion and increased communion between the members and with God? Does a communal discernment retreat respond well to the expected goal? Are the members of the group ready to pray in personal silence with the help of a Holy Scripture text? Are they ready to share the fruits of their prayer with others? Is there an atmosphere of faith? Is there enough internal freedom and readiness for change, and for receiving surprises from the Spirit? How long should the session be? Suggest that people arrive a little early in order to get some rest. Help them to understand that they need to arrive rested for this type of retreat.

Team of facilitators: 2, 3 or 4 people from diverse backgrounds - lay, religious or priest, different genders, psychological types (MBTI), etc. Work with somebody who already has experience in communal discernment. **Be prepared to ensure any follow-up sessions asked for by the group.**

House: A retreat house? Other house? Good room for plenary sessions? Enough rooms for small groups? Is there a chapel available? Food? Meal schedule? Who does the cooking/shopping? Coffee breaks? Is there a printer and photocopier available? Internet? Where? When? Cost? etc.

Free time: Spending time in the garden? Woods? At the seaside? In the mountains? Shrine? Enjoying tourist activities? Who will gather information regarding maps and train timetables?

Secretarial work: Invitation, registration, transportation, various bits of information; list of participants with their addresses + room numbers; nametags; building plan indicating where rooms are; retreat house contact information; collecting money; songbooks, guitar, feathers, big sheets, markers, computer, USB key, this Communal Discernment Manual ("Welcoming and Building Communion Together"), Spiritual Exercises, Bible, etc.

Team Preparation: Together (through meetings, e-mails and Skype conversations) clarify the expected goal. Put the program for the whole session on one sheet. Adjust each day's timetable as necessary. Adjust, when necessary, the theme of each handout, of each presentation and of each plenary session. Who introduces the handout? Who does the presentation? Who will lead the plenary session etc.? Make this work of preparation a time of ongoing training.

V. EXAMPLES OF PRAYER SHEET HANDOUTS

Ps 1 . My Deepest Desires and Dreams

Texts and Wisdom

“Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, ‘What do you want?’” (John 1:38).

“James and John, [...] ‘We want you to do us a favour [...] Allow us to sit one at your right and the other at your left’” (Mk 10:35-45).

“I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already” (Lk 12:49).

“On his bed in Loyola, Ignatius had two dreams. The main click in his journey happened when he became aware of two opposite moods in him, caused by these two desires” (Cf. A Pilgrim’s Journey – Autobiography of Saint Ignatius).

“I had a dream” (Martin Luther King. Cf. also Gandhi and Nelson Mandela).

You will never achieve the dreams that you did not give yourself permission to have.

Image: Try to imagine how things will be when your deepest desires become reality.

The grace that I desire: From God, I seek a deep awareness of my deepest hopes, dreams, desires, and I ask Him to dare to speak about these things within the group.

Points for meditation:

1. I take the time to be touched by the Scripture texts. What were Jacques and Jean really seeking, what was their deepest desire? What was Jesus’ desire for them?
2. I consider various times in my life when something within me welled up and I was conscious of my deepest hopes and desires for myself and for humanity at large.
3. What desire is burning in my heart?
4. I imagine that I am dead. I would like to have achieved the following in my life;...

Conversation with the Lord (Father or/and Son): What would He tell me about these desires and dreams? What should I like to tell Him?

Conclusion: I identify the dreams and desires I wish to share with other members of the group at this time.



Ps 2. My Deepest Experiences with God

Texts:

“Do not be afraid [...] I have called you by your name, you are mine [...] I regard you as precious, you are honoured and I love you” (Is 43:1, 4).

“You are my son, the Beloved. My favour rests on you” (Mk 1:11).

“I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love” (John 15:8-10).

“There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the Kingdom” (cf. Lk 12:22-32).

Image: I see the Lord accompanying me on my journey.

The grace that I desire: I want and desire a deep awareness that I am God’s beloved, so that I may have a deep trust in the Lord’s constant love and concern for me.

Points for meditation:

1. I make myself present with Jesus at His baptism (Mk 1:11).
For Jesus, the experience at His baptism gave Him an awareness of His relationship to God, the Father. It contained His sense of identity and vocation, the base from which He could live out the rest of His life.
2. I review my life and recall key experiences that indicate to me that I am the beloved of God.
3. Aware of Jesus’ presence with me, I dwell on the most significant of these experiences.

Conversation with the Lord (Father and/or Son): What would He tell me about these main experiences of my life? What should I like to tell Him?

God...

Me...

God...

Me....

Conclusion: I shall identify which experiences of my life I want to share with the other members of the group at this time.

Remember: “Each one is an expert of his/her own experience.”

Ps 3. My name of grace

Context

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church... “(Mt 16:15-18).

Image

In my imagination, I revisit the circumstances, the persons, the events ... that shaped my life in a unique manner, that are at the foundation of who I am today. I imagine Jesus walking next to me all along my journey.

The grace I ask for

I ask the Lord for the grace to better understand the relationship that unites me to Him: who he is for me and who I am in His eyes. I ask Him to welcome the name that He gives me.

Points for meditation

- In my relationship with God, what is the central experience – the most important grace – that enlightens my life?
- Have I ever spontaneously felt, at least one time in my life, close to God, heart turned toward Him, united to Him? I hold this grace in my memory and let share it in the words I use today.
- When I review my history (family, events, meetings...) what personal meaning, uniqueness, has God given to it?
- What particular gifts has God given to me? I would I describe my vocation, my personal mission in the world? What would the people who know me say about this subject?
- When have I given the very best of myself? When have I been able to say: « That is the real me »?
- In what circumstances have I felt the most in harmony with myself, with others, with God?

Dialogue with the Lord

I thank the Lord for loving me personally, in a unique manner, for creating me with a feature of His face that is the foundation of my being and my mission.

Conclusion

Ps 4. The events of the History Line

Text

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹"What things?" he asked. (Luke 24: 13-19)

The grace that I desire:

I ask the Holy Spirit to help me to recognise and welcome, without censoring, the significant events that have marked our history.

Points for meditation:

1. In my imagination, I listen to the conversation of the disciples of Emmaus, paying attention to their words, the silences, the looks exchanged between them, their attitudes, their thoughts, feelings, aspirations.

2. I call to mind the events that, according to me, are the most significant in our history:

(a) First of all, accepting that what I call to mind will be mixed with interpretations, thoughts, sentiments and aspirations: happy or difficult events, joyful or painful, moments of communion or division, of fruitfulness or failure, etc...

(b) Secondly, by making an effort to describe the bare facts, stripping them of all judgments, interpretations, feelings, aspirations...⁵⁸.

Conversation with the Lord: I enter into dialogue with Him.

Conclusion: I note the fruits of my prayer that I want to share with the group.

In the small group

After having listened to each one, and after a moment of silent reflection, the group must name the four or five events that seem to be the most important and write them on a « post-it » (one event on each post-it).

⁵⁸ Later on, the participants will be asked to share the sentiments they experienced during these events, or perhaps are still experiencing.

Ps 5. My feelings in relation with the History line

Gospel texts

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father... « (Luke 10: 21).

*Jesus is **amazed**: "I have not found such great faith even in Israel." (Luke 7: 9)*

*He was **amazed** at their lack of faith. (Mark 6: 6).*

*As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he **wept** over it (Luke 19: 41).*

*He was **deeply moved** in spirit and **troubled**. Jesus **wept**. (John 11: 33 & 35).*

*And he began to be **sorrowful** and **troubled**. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." (Matt 26: 37-38).*

Image

With Jesus as my companion on the journey⁵⁹, I return to all of the events noted on our history line.

The grace that I desire:

I ask the Lord for the grace to perceive and to name the feelings and sentiments that these events evoke in me.

Points for meditation:

1. From our history, I choose those events that seem to me to be the most decisive.
2. I become aware of the sensations, emotions, feelings, I experienced during these events and/or today. I make an effort to name them as precisely as possible.

Conversation with the Lord: What does he say to me about this? What do I say to Him?

Conclusion: I note what I wish to share with the group.

⁵⁹ This is an allusion to the disciples of Emmaus: « They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.... **Jesus** himself came up and walked along with them; (Luke 24: 14-15).

Ps 6. What is helping, what is hindering?

Text Principle and foundation (SE 23)

The human person is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by so doing save his or her soul; and it is for the human person that the other things on the face of the earth are created to help in the pursuit of this end.

It follows from this, that the person is to make use of these things in so far as they help towards this end, and to be free of them in so far they stand in the way of it.

To attain this, we need to make ourselves indifferent towards all created things, provided that we are able to make a free choice and there is no prohibition. Thus, for our part we should not want health more than sickness, wealth more than poverty, fame more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one – and so with everything else; desiring and choosing only what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.

The grace that I desire:

I ask the Lord for the grace to be truly free concerning all the means that are used or could be used.

Points for meditation:

1. I allow the text above to enter within me.
2. I recall my experiences in my group concerning each person's level of participation and commitment, the general atmosphere, the freedom, the confidence, the generosity, the audacity, the faith, the availability, the clarity of goals and objectives, the pertinence of the means, the creativity, the leadership...:
 - What helps this group to be more alive?
 - What are the obstacles to the vitality of the group?
 - Where are we not free?

Conversation with the Lord: I imagine a dialogue with God (or with the divine Spirit, or with the divine energy of life within me and within others).

I listen. What could He tell me now?

What would I like to tell Him?

Conclusion: I make a note of what I want to share with my group.

Ps 7. My « zones » of freedom and unfreedom

Text

Our deepest longing
is to live⁶⁰
one thanks to the other, one for the other,
being simultaneously sensitive to the needs of others AND to mine
AND to those of everyone in the world -
above all, to the needs of those who suffer most.

Therefore we are invited to seek freedom
from all other longings
such as health, security, fame, fondness...

Image: I revisit the times and circumstances in my life when I truly experienced that I was free.
And I revisit those circumstances when I experienced that I was not free.

The grace that I desire: I ask for the grace to recognise and name those « places » of freedom
and unfreedom within me.

Points for meditation:

- I meditate and pray on the above text.
- What, in my relationship with others, stimulates my liberty, helps me to become, truly and deeply, more myself? *confidence, listening, welcome... ?*
- What blocks, becomes an obstacle to my liberty: *fear, prejudices, resentments...?*
- Among all of these things, what do I find the most painful, the most difficult to accept?

Conversation with the Lord: I speak to the Lord, heart to heart, about what prevents my liberty and what stimulates it. I express my feelings and I expose my needs. I ask Him for the grace to grow in liberty.

Conclusion: I note concisely what I want to share from the fruits of my prayer.

⁶⁰ This includes life after physical death. It is the life that the Father gives to the Son. It is thus that He is Father. And it is of the life received from the Father that the Son makes his own life. It is in this that He is Son. That all human beings have life in abundance is the wish of the Son (See. John 10: 10 and 17: 3).

Ps 8. In order to be more ready to give a good interpretation on another's statements

Texts

- "Do not judge, or you too will be judged."⁶¹ (Mt 7: 1).
- "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Mt 7 :12).
- "To assure better cooperation between the one who is giving the Exercises and the exercitant, and more beneficial results for both, it is necessary to suppose that every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another's statement than to condemn it as false. If an orthodox construction cannot be put on a proposition, the one who made it should be asked how he understands it. If he is in error, he should be corrected with all kindness. If this does not suffice, all appropriate means should be used to bring him to a correct interpretation, and so defend the proposition from error." (SE 22)
- The process of NVC =
 - **Observed facts.**
 - **Feelings** agreeable or disagreeable, (mine and yours).
 - **Needs** satisfied or unsatisfied (mine and yours)
 - **The request** clear and concrete - or **Thank you** in detail.

Image: I choose a situation in which I am living a difficult interpersonal relationship.

The grace that I desire: I ask the Spirit of communion, of divine energy in and between us, to enlighten my understanding of what is happening in this situation.

Points for meditation:

1. I welcome and savour the texts that have been proposed.
2. In the situation that I have chosen to look at, I take the time to :
 - a. describe the observed facts without any judgment,
 - b. become aware of my feelings AND the other's feelings,
 - c. become conscious of my needs AND the other's needs,
 - d. formulate a concrete request, or a precise thank you.
3. In the proposed steps, where did experience the most difficulties, resistance? What has this helped me to understand?

Conversation with the Lord: Either a request or a thank you.

Conclusion: What am I going to share in my group?

⁶¹ « Do not judge » is taken here in the narrow sense of « Have neither prejudices nor negative presumptions ». Because to judge, in the sense of « making a judgment, discerning » is always required (Cf. Mt 16: 2). It is possible that a positive presumption ends in catastrophe, for example, when we refuse to admit that the behaviour of someone whom we esteem can have aspects that are completely inappropriate, even scandalous.

Ps 9. The mondialisation of indifference

Texts

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.» (Luke 10: 30-32).

«It happens that, when we are well and feeling good, we can surely forget to think about others (something that God never does), we are no longer interested in their problems, their sufferings or the injustices that they experience... and so, our heart can become indifferent (...) This selfish attitude of indifference has become worldwide today, to such a point that we can talk about the mondialisation of indifference "(Pope Francis, message for Lent 2015).

Image: In my imagination, I see a map of the world and those places where there are persons, and the Christ himself, on the cross. I see myself implicated in these situations of injustice and indifference.

The grace that I desire: I ask God to become conscious of the wounds, the evil, the sins that affect our world. I ask that my heart be profoundly touched.

Points for meditation:

1. I contemplate the above texts.
2. What are the situations of injustice, of evil, of sin, recently seen and heard of, far away and close to me?
3. I see and feel how the power of evil at work in all of these realities breaks the heart of God.

Conversation with the Lord: I imagine the Christ, our Lord, before me on the cross, and I ask how is it that He, the Creator, has become a man and died for our sins... And me ... what am I doing?

Conclusion: I note briefly what I wish to share in my group.

Ps 10. My personal complicity with darkness and sin

Text

The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." (Gen 3: 12).

«Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4: 9).

Image: I see myself in my group in the places of my apostolic engagements.

The grace I desire: I ask God for the grace to see more clearly my personal responsibility in the wounds, the evil, the sin that affects my group. I ask that my heart be touched and I be filled with shame and confusion.

Points for meditation:

1. I contemplate the above texts.
2. I consider all that has been shared and noted in the plenary session.
3. I look at my life, my group, my relationships, the mission that has been confided to me, my responsibilities.... I recognise how much I participate in the darkness and sin of my group, and how much I have let evil have a hold on me.
4. I consider who this God is that I have sinned against. What difficulties He has with me!

Conversation with the Lord: I cry out with profound emotion and admiration, «I am still alive! Lord, I give you thanks. You continue to offer yourself to me in spite of my weakness. With your grace, help me to make amends for the future ».

Ps 11. The Incarnation

- *The goal of the Exercise: to prepare ourselves, first of all, "to hear what God is calling us to" and secondly, "to decide how to respond in a concrete manner".*
- *It could be useful to present a PowerPoint beforehand illustrating the variety of situations in the world: war and peace, joys and sadness, murders and compassion...*

Text:

« How the Three Divine Persons were looking down upon the whole expanse of all the world, filled with people, and how on seeing that all were going down into Hell⁶², they decreed in their eternity that the Second Person would become human to save⁶³ the human race. Thus when 'the fullness of time' came they sent the angel Gabriel to our Lady" (SE 102).

Image:

Consider the Three Divine Persons looking at the whole world with all of its many satisfied and unsatisfied needs AND AT THE SAME TIME looking at our little group with its very big aspirations.

The grace I desire:

I ask for the grace to be able, desiring to follow the example of the Divine Persons, to hear the needs/aspirations of the world and to respond to them with generosity and efficacy.

Points for meditation:

- I see all humanity: white, black; at war, at peace; laughing, crying... What are they feeling? What are their needs, their aspirations?
- I see the Three Divine Persons looking at the whole universe. What are they feeling? What is their aspiration?
- I see Mary and the angel who greets her. What was her desire before receiving this Good News? What were her feelings after she received the news?
- I see myself and all the members of our little group. What do I feel? What are my needs, my desires, my aspirations?

Conclusion: What am I going to share with my group?

⁶² «...descending into Hell » means no longer being in relationship with ourselves, with others, with God.

⁶³ « Save » means re-establishing the relationship of humans with themselves, with others and with God.

My image of God has evolved

Texts

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly. Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment. (Mt 15: 21-28)

And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours. (Mt 25:25)

Image: From my memory, I choose an image, a photo, any representation that evokes for me the word, « God ».

The grace that I desire: I ask for the strength of the Spirit that all of my desires and all of my acts be in harmony with my deepest longing: to contribute to life, **to** that of others **AND to** my own.

Points for meditation:

I choose from among the points those that will help me the most:

- I let myself be moved by the Bible texts: what are the images of God, the feelings, the needs of the Canaanite woman? And those of the servant who hid the talent?
- What image of God have I received in my human and religious formation?
- What is the God like that I believe in today?
- How has my image of God changed through the years?
- Because of whom, or what experiences?
- How does that affect my liberty today?

Conversation with the Lord: I converse familiarly with the Lord, as He reveals Himself to me today.

Conclusion: I prepare what I want to share from the fruit of my prayer.

Jesus' Way and Call

Texts:

"At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son decides to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry'" (Mt 11:25-30).

[...] it is worthy of consideration to see Christ Our Lord, the eternal King, with the entire human race before Him, as to all and to each one in particular His calls goes out: "It is my will to conquer the whole world and every enemy, and so enter into the glory of my Father. Therefore all those who want to come with me will have to labour with me, so that by following me in my suffering they may also follow me into glory" (SE 95).

Image: I see us being called by the Christ.

Grace: I ask the grace to know better Jesus' way of doing, His way of being and calling, so that I might better love and follow Him.

Points for meditation:

1. I listen carefully what Jesus is saying to His disciples in particular and no less to all human beings, whatever their religions, opinions, cultures, etc.
2. I see each member of my group (including me) as personally called by Jesus.
3. At this stage, I don't worry about which particular call is addressed to my group today. Here we are talking about a general call to all; a call of Jesus speaking inside each human conscience; a call to follow His way as the only one able to make us fully human.

Conversation the Lord: Given where I am today, I express to the Lord my desire, or simply my desire for the desire, that I have to offer myself to Him, to follow Him in adopting His manner of being, of doing, of proceeding.

Conclusion: I note precisely and briefly what I wish to share in my group.

You are the Christ – You are Peter (the Rock)

Text

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church (...)

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” (Mt 16: 13-28)

The grace that I desire: I ask for inner knowledge of the Lord, who, for me and for all humanity, became human, so that I can better love and follow Him.

Points for meditation:

1. I will pay particular attention to:
 - the terms expressing line of descent: the Son of man, the Son of the Living God, Simon, son of John, the body and blood, my Father... / What does this reveal?
 - to the passages where Simon-Peter is called Peter (Rock) and the places where he is called Simon /What does that make him aware of?
2. I make use of my reflections for my own life, my identity, my vocation, my mission, my « name of grace ».

Conversation with the Three Divine Persons: I consider what I want to say to the Divine Persons. I will ask according to what I feel in order to better follow and imitate Our Lord.



Meditation on the Life-Death-Resurrection Cycle

Texts:

“Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, the wine runs out, and the skins are lost. No; they put new wine in fresh skins and both are preserved” (Mt 9: 17).

“Unless the grain of wheat die, it bears no fruit” (John 12: 24).

Image: I imagine the world before the continents inched apart. Then I let my imagination soar into the world of the year 200 000. What will the world and its organizations be like?

The grace that I desire: I ask for the grace to see how the dynamics of the Life-Death-Resurrection Cycle clarifies the functioning of my group.

Points for meditation:

1. How do I understand the reality of the Life-Death-Resurrection Cycle as it applies to my group?
2. What dynamics of the Life-Death-Resurrection Cycle have I been more or less unaware or unconscious of?
3. What is the value of having clear goals and objectives before initiating programs?
4. What is the inherent value of trying to look for a solution to a problem at least one level below where the problem arises? Have I had such experiences that I could share?
5. Do we have good methods of handling things on the down-side of the Life-Death-Resurrection cycle?
6. Am I convinced that my group will follow this Cycle?
7. In my group, what is dying and what is rising?
8. Are there any other things we have learned and which should be retained from the Life-Death-Resurrection Cycle?

Conversation with the Lord: What does He want to tell me? What would I like to tell Him?

Conclusion: I identify and note what I wish to share with other members of the group.



My attitude toward Leadership

Text:

- The diagram of the *three leadership styles*.
- The text that explains the diagram.

Image: I take some time to "sink in" to my usual leadership stance. What does it look like? What animal would be a good symbol for my leadership stance? Why?

The grace that I desire: I ask the grace to know myself better in regard to leadership, in order to exercise effective, empowering leadership and in order not to be swayed by mere personal preferences, conveniences or unconscious attitudes.

Points for meditation:

- 1 When I find myself in a leadership position, am I most comfortable exercising directive, consultative or facilitative leadership?
2. Do I find myself most responsive to directive, consultative or facilitative leadership in others?
3. What I do not particularly handle well when I am in a leadership situation is ...?
4. Am I able to change my style of leadership (directive, participative, facilitative) according to the circumstances, the state of the group, the issues, etc.?
5. Am I able to delegate tasks to others, putting trust in them?
6. Am I able to say "No" to a leader when what he/she is asking is in conflict with my conscience?

Conversation with the Lord: What does He want to tell me? What would I like to tell Him?

Conclusion: I identify what I wish to share with other members of the group at this time.

In order to overcome the feeling of powerlessness

Texts

- « *I will pour out my Spirit on all people. » (Acts 2: 17 and Jl 3:1).*
- « *After me comes the one more powerful than I (...) I baptize you with^l water, but he will baptize you with^l the Holy Spirit.*” (Mark 1:7-8).
- « *In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. (Mark 3:27).*
- « *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8).*

Image:

I see the Apostles in front of the cross... then on the day of Pentecost and in the Acts of the Apostles.

The grace that I desire:

I ask for an increase in my faith in the power of the Spirit who makes possible what seems impossible.

Points for meditation:

1. I pray over the texts and I observe the changes in Jesus and in the Apostles.
2. I see my group⁶⁴ and the changes that I desire.

Conversation with the Lord: I speak to Him as a friend speaks to a friend.

Conclusion: I choose what I would like to share from the fruit of my prayer.

⁶⁴ My couple, my community, my team...

Zacchaeus welcomes Jesus

Text:

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19: 1-10)

Image

I imagine the Gospel scene and all the personalities, looking at what they do, listening to what they say (I can see myself as if I am a movie director, being responsible for organising a group for the scene)

The grace that I desire:

I ask for the grace to become conscious of the infinite Goodness that is bestowed on me by the Lord.

Points for meditation:

- ✓ I ask myself these questions: What were the **feelings** of the different persons (Jesus, Zacchaeus, the crowd? What were their **needs** (desires, aspirations, wishes)?
- ✓ What are my feelings when I look at all of this? What **need, desire** is awakened in me?
- ✓ In what way is Jesus looking at me now? How would I describe it?
- ✓ What do I feel happening inside me in front of His gaze?

Conversation with the Lord: I speak to Jesus and I imagine what he says to me.
Or, in silence, I bask in the warmth of His loving gaze⁶⁵.

Conclusion: I note what I want to share in the group.

⁶⁵ I taste, I savour His presence and let it fill my heart. It is in my relationship with Him that I become truly myself without being afraid to be judged or condemned by anyone. It is Jesus who can reveal to me the best of who I am. He can transform me in such a way that the best takes precedence over all the rest. Jesus gives me the Spirit of Benevolence so that I can see everyone as He sees them.

VI. EXAMPLES OF GAMES

Going together through the knot

Material

A piece of rope 15 meters long. Two chairs. A large room, or outdoors.

Preparation

The facilitator makes a simple knot in the middle of the cord without tightening it. Each end of the rope is attached to a chair. Place the chairs about 8 meters apart.

Action

The facilitator asks 4 participants to stand beside one of the chairs and for each one to close one hand loosely around the rope so that it can slide through their hand (facilitator will demonstrate).

The facilitator reads the following instructions exactly as written, without any commentary. No more information is to be given, even if the participants ask questions:

« The knot symbolises a difficulty that your group must pass through. The goal is for all four members of the group to go through the knot as rapidly as possible, having as much fun as possible, without letting go of the rope ».

The facilitator adds, "Everyone else is to observe what is happening, while paying particular attention to the feelings they are experiencing».

After

The facilitator asks:

- « What are the facts that you observed? » (Phase 1 of NVC)
- « What agreeable and disagreeable feelings did you have? » (Phase 2 of NVC)
- « What were the satisfied and unsatisfied needs? » (Phase 3 of NVC)
- « Is there a request to make? A thank you to express? » (Phase 4 of NVC)

The Spielkroll

Material needed : 1 die, 1 game piece (pawn) and one ball point pen per person, some sheets of coloured paper and coloured felt pens, for example pink, green, yellow, white, and sheet of flip chart paper (2 x A3).

Objective: Communication

This is a board game. Each space corresponds to a question that the player must answer. The others listen without speaking! There are four different coloured spaces which correspond to four different types of questions.

The values of the coloured spaces

Yellow: « Give us your definition of... ». This concerns abstract thought.
Examples: « Give us your definition of: a diploma, audacity, dialogue... »

Green: « If you were an object, plant or animal you would be a: ». Here, we are in the realm of imagination.

Examples: « If you were a piece of furniture, you would be a: ...; If you were a flower, you would be a:... If you were a bird, a country... »

The person responding must give the reason for choosing a certain object, plant or animal.

Rose: « Tell us about a time in your life when you had a strong emotional experience ». Here we enter into the affective domain.

Examples : « Tell us about a time in your life when you experience being in difficulty, being very happy, being very angry, etc... whether in your family, or a class, or a group, or in community... »

White: When players land on a white space, they will ask another player a question concerning something that the player previously said. This requires an effort from everyone to pay attention to what is being said!

Here are two examples:

« When you talked about the situation when you were really furious, you said that you were really upset with "x". Can you tell us for what reason? »

« You said that community is a place where everyone has to assume their material responsibilities. Do you think that we do not do that in our community? »

Making the game

The players are invited to make the game themselves, in whole or in part. For example, you can give out two sheets of paper of each colour so that they can write down the questions that they choose.

Guidelines

1. The principle attitude is one of respectful listening to each other.
2. The game will be as meaningful as the depth to which each person shares.
3. Never share more than what you wish to share.
4. What is shared during the game is not talked about outside the group.

15 Questions

Material: A copy of the following questions for each participant.

Gather the entire group in a large space (outside or a large room). The facilitator explains the goal of the exercise: « The questions that you are going to receive are to help you get to know one another better. The questions were asked by Yann Arthus-Bertrand to hundreds of persons around the world. The responses were filmed and presented during the '6 Billion Others' exhibition. Yann Arthus-Bertrand is well known for having produced the book of photos « The Earth From Above ». He is an explorer of the human earth and the human soul. See also his film "Human".

Next, the facilitator asks the participants to choose someone as a partner that they do not know well. Each pair will have five or six minutes to two or three of the questions.

After six minutes, the facilitator will give the signal to change partners, still choosing someone that they do not know very well. the new partners will ask questions from the list, as before.

Change partners three or four times.

1. What is your very first memory?
2. Are you happy?
3. When was the last time you cried? For what reason?
4. What is your biggest dream today?
5. What was the greatest hardship/ordeal that you have had to face in your life?
What did you learn from it?
6. How do you feel in the world? How do you situate yourself? Where do you see your place?
7. Do you feel that you give and receive enough love?
8. What could you not forgive?
9. Do you feel free?
10. How do you recreate; what energizes you?
11. In your everyday life, what can you not do without?
12. Do you sometimes have the desire to run away, to escape? To where?
13. Do you believe in God? What does He represent for you?
14. In your opinion, what is the sense of life?
15. What is your favorite song? Can you sing it for me?

VII. ANNEXES: TOOLS FOR A BETTER COMMUNICATION

Four steps: facts –feelings-needs-request or thank you

In section n° 22 of the Exercises, Ignatius writes that the person who gives the exercises and the one who receives them will have more beneficial results if they are ready to put a good interpretation of the other's statements rather than condemn them as false.⁶⁶ He is recommending that we put our love into action, always seeking all the appropriate means.

The Non-Violent Communication (NVC) of Marshall Rosenberg is one of those means. Entirely coherent with the life of a believer, and particularly a believer in the Trinity, NVC is at the same time open to everyone⁶⁷.

Instead of focussing on « Who is right and who is wrong? », he proposes paying attention to the feelings and needs of the people involved.

NVC =

1. **Observed facts.**
2. **Feelings** *agreeable or disagreeable. Mine and yours.*
3. **Needs** *satisfied or unsatisfied. Mine and yours.*
4. **The request** *clear and concrete - or Thank you in detail.*

1. **Observed facts**, without interpretation neither judgment.
2. **Feelings** (sensations of the body, or feelings, emotions) agreeable or disagreeable that help us to understand our needs (aspirations, desires, wishes) satisfied or unsatisfied. Everything that we feel, whether it is agreeable or disagreeable, is a sign of life⁶⁸.
3. **Needs** are universal. They are the yearnings, desires, wishes of our common humanity. It is why they are the basis of consensus.
4. **The request** (if a need is unsatisfied) must be concrete in order to have concrete results. In the same manner, when we say, « **thank you** », it is important to be precise about the reason we are saying thank you (in the case of a satisfied need).

⁶⁶ The Bible names the Holy Spirit, the Advocate (John 14: 16) and Satan: the accuser (Rv. 12: 10). Jesus asks that we do not condemn (Lk 6, 37).

⁶⁷ Refer to the books of Marshall Rosenberg in the bibliography at the end of this manual.

The spiritual bases of the NVC are to be found in Marshall Rosenberg, *Practical Spirituality: The Spiritual Basis of Nonviolent Communication*, 2005, (32 pages) ISBN 978-1892005144.

⁶⁸ Even disagreeable feelings (anger, sadness, worry, discouragement...) are signs of life. To say that "they come from the bad (evil) spirit," risks obscuring the life contained within them. A disappointment, for example, is a sign of an unfulfilled desire, a need that has not (yet) been satisfied. Only the living has desires...

Agreeable and disagreeable feelings/emotions/sensations

What I feel	
When my needs are satisfied (agreeable feelings/sensations)	When my needs are not satisfied (disagreeable feelings/sensations)
ENERGY	FATIGUE
INTEREST I am curious, full of zeal, motivated, filled with wonder.	DISINTEREST I am bored, unmotivated, “yawn”.
JOY I am happy, content, encouraged, connected to others and the world, full of hope, full of excitement, filled with gratitude.	SADNESS I feel unhappy, discontent, disappointed, frustrated, discouraged, hopeless, alone, powerless, resigned.
PEACE I feel calm, relaxed, cool, audacious comfortable, invigorated.	FEAR I feel anxious, tense, agitated, stressed, overwhelmed choked, hurt, stuck, and imprisoned.
ASSURANCE I feel sure of myself, strong, confident, a sense of well-being.	CONFUSION I feel fragile, vulnerable, hesitant, distrustful, uneasy.
TEARS Tears of joy, gratitude, compassion	ANGER⁶⁹ I feel furious, aggressive, on edge, revolted, disgusted.

⁶⁹ Often, anger can hide another feeling: fear, sadness, confusion...



Satisfied and unsatisfied needs/desires/aspirations

Needs, desires and aspirations that are more associated with the heart

PARTICIPATION, contributing to more life for others AND myself, above all, for the weakest; giving and receiving; using gifts and capacities.

EMPATHY, COMPASSION, listening with my heart; perceiving the painful feelings and needs of others as well as my own.

LOVE, friendship, affection, tenderness, attention, tact, delicacy, human warmth

PROTECTION, defend from dangers.

RESPECT

SOLIDARITY

LIBERTY

INTIMACY

CELEBRATION

FORGIVENESS...

Needs, desires and aspirations that are more associated with the spirit

To find meaning in life,

Truth,

Goodness,

Beauty,

Unity,

Creativity,

Progress, growth,

Exploration, experimentation, learning, formation, teaching.

Knowledge,

Power ...

Bodily or material needs, desires and aspirations

Time, space,

Air, water, nourishment,

Rest, movement,

Light, obscurity,

Silence, music,

Warmth, coolness,

Lodging,

Hygiene,

Health,

Sex...

Not confusing what I feel with what I think

Here are some adjectives that express mostly a **thought**, or an intellectual **interpretation** of the behavior of another person that I feel in my affective being (emotions, sentiments) or in my body (sensations).

I think that I am:

JUDGED, ACCUSED, CRITICIZED.

BLAMED, shamed.

DESPISED, humiliated, considered worthless.

ATTACKED, menaced, mistreated, overwhelmed, harassed, provoked.

DECEIVED, betrayed.

FORCED, coerced, manipulated, exploited, trapped, cornered.

EXCLUDED, rejected, neglected, ignored, abandoned.

If I ratify one of these thoughts⁷⁰, I am making a negative judgment on the other person. I believe that the other person is the cause of the pain I feel. But in truth, other people are never the true reason for my feelings. They can only be, at most, a triggering factor.

If I signal to other people that they are the cause of what I am feeling⁷¹, they will assume a defensive attitude which will diminish the chances that my needs will be satisfied⁷².

It sometimes happens that I interpret my own behavior negatively. I criticize myself; consider myself worthless, broken, rejected... What can I do? Be aware of what is happening, have some empathy for myself and look for the need that is unsatisfied.

To accuse others or myself is to cut myself off from life. It is death.

The Gospel says: *«Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned⁷³»* (Lk 6: 37).

⁷⁰ For example, if I say to myself: « He humiliated me. ».

⁷¹ For example, if I say to the other person: « You humiliated me. ».

⁷² You can see a dramatic example at: <http://www.esdac.net/CNV-Interpreter-mene-a-la-mort.html> (1 page).

⁷³ « Do not judge » is taken here in the narrow sense of « Have neither prejudices nor negative presumptions ». Because to judge, in the sense of « making a judgment, discerning » is always required (Cf. Mt 16: 2). It is possible that a positive presumption ends in catastrophe, for example, when we refuse to admit that the behaviour of someone whom we esteem can have aspects that are completely inappropriate, even scandalous.

Welcoming reproaches, accusations, insults, as cries of distress

It is my responsibility to welcome favorably, and without judgment, the silence, the cry as well as the gestures of the other person.

The experience of the Canaanite woman (Mt. 15: 21-28) is a striking example. She comes to implore Jesus to heal her daughter. Jesus responds: « It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs». Faced with that, she could have reacted in three different manners by saying:

- « By treating me as a dog, this man insults and humiliates me. It is a sign that he is not a man of God. I'm leaving. »
- « This is a man of God and he refuses to give me what I have asked for. I will obey the will of God manifested through this man. So, I leave. »
- « The Holy Spirit illumines my spirit and my heart. The Spirit has kindled in me the need to see my daughter healed. He makes me conscious of the feelings of this man of God. He makes me understand his need to be authorised to step outside of his narrow understanding of his mission. He helps me to find the argument that will be in favour of an increase of life, a life that will be richer for everyone.

A reproach, an accusation, an insult are all painful expressions of an unsatisfied need. An unsatisfied need is the crack through which the Holy Spirit wishes to fill us with grace. If someone insults me, rather than allowing myself to be hurt to the core, I place myself in the "NVC mode" and I turn the insult into a distress cry, « Help me; search for my unsatisfied need! ».

Unsatisfied needs can leave wounds that go back to infancy. What is important is to remain present to the person who is suffering. Don't run away⁷⁴. Try to see Jesus continuing to suffer His passion in the person (SE 195). Don't look for a solution. Accept your powerlessness. Just simply be with⁷⁵.

The knowledge and the practice of NVC give us the tools we need in order to rejoice when someone insults us (Mt 5, 10-11). The reason for our joy is that, being associated with Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit who will give us the compassion and strength to overcome our suffering.

It is what Ignatius asks of us at the heart of the Exercises: that we may obtain grace through bearing contempt and humiliations (ES 147).

⁷⁴ Don't run away like the Apostles who went to sleep when Jesus entered into his agony (Lk 22: 45).

⁷⁵ Cf. the meaning of Emmanuel, « God with us » (Mt 1, 23).



VIII. TO DEEPEN WHAT YOU LEARNED

The website www.esdac.net will give you information about:

- how to learn to facilitate groups using the ESDAC method:
<http://www.esdac.net/-Learn-to-facilitate-groups-with-.html>
- assistance can be offered to your team, group, community, couple...
<http://www.esdac.net/-You-want-us-to-help-you-.html>

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