



Spiritual Conversation Guide for Synod Continental Stage



The Working Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) gathers and restores to the local Churches what the People of God from around the world said in the first year of the Synod. It is meant to guide us and enable us to deepen our discernment, keeping in mind the basic question that animates the entire process: “How does this ‘journeying together,’ ... allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?” (PD, no.2).

This Spiritual Conversation Guide is provided to assist local parishes, universities and other communities reflect upon the DCS, either in-person or virtually, and provide feedback on the content of the DCS to your local bishop and Synod Delegates as they prepare for the Continental Assemblies in North America.

The North American Continental Assemblies will begin in early February 2023, therefore, it is important to complete your spiritual conversation process and submit the feedback to your local bishop before Feb. 1, 2023. A feedback form is provided with this guide

Duration of Spiritual Conversation: 60-90 minutes

Schedule:

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer 5 mins
2. Overview of Synod and Continental Stage 10 mins
3. Individual Reflection on DCS – Preparing for the Conversation 10 mins

5. Spiritual Conversations 50 mins
6. Naming the Graces 2 mins
7. Closing Prayer 2 mins.

Preparation:

In an appropriate space, arrange 8-9 chairs in a circle with a prayer table in the center (this could include a candle, bible, cloth cover, etc.) Provide notepads, pens and name tags for each participant. Each conversation should have a facilitator and notetaker and 6-7 participants. If part of a larger assembly, many circles of chairs can be set up or multiple breakout rooms on Zoom can be provided each with a dedicated facilitator and notetaker.

Welcome and Opening Prayer: *Offered by pastor in large assembly or by the facilitator of the conversation.*

Overview of Synod and Continental Stage: Materials and links are provided at www.synodmeetings.com that offer an overview of the synod as well as the Continental Stage and Working Document.

Reflecting on the DCS – Preparing for a Spiritual Conversation

The DCS offers a series of questions (106) as a basis for reflection. After the opening prayer and overview, participants are invited to reflect on these questions and write down their responses as they prepare for a spiritual conversation. The questions can be displayed, printed or projected so that all can see them. The questions are as follows:

1. EXPERIENCES OF CHURCH

- After having read and prayed with the DCS, what resonates most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent?

- Which experiences are new, or illuminating to you?

2. CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

- After having read and prayed with the DCS, what significant tensions or differences emerge as particularly important in your continent's perspective?
- Consequently, what are the questions or issues that should be addressed and considered in the next steps of the process?

3. PRIORITIES AND CALLS TO ACTION

- Looking at what emerges from the previous two questions: What are the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action that can be shared with other local Churches around the world?
- What should be discussed during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023 in Rome?

Spiritual Conversation Process

Ground Rules for Spiritual Conversations: *The Ground Rules for Spiritual Conversations are first read by the facilitator and all are asked to affirm. The Ground Rules for Spiritual Conversations can be found as a separate link at www.synodmeetings.com*

(After affirmation of ground rules)

Facilitator Script:

Thank you all for joining this Synod Spiritual Conversation. During the next 50 minutes, each person will be invited to share their reflections on the Synod Working Document. During this first round of conversation, I will invite you to offer your reflections on each of the three questions. Each person will have 2 minutes to respond to the first question. We will then take a minute of silence to reflect together. You will then have up to 2 minutes for the second question followed by a silent minute and then 2 minutes for the 3rd question. As others are speaking, I would encourage you to listen with an open and humble heart.

After these first rounds of conversation, we will again have a minute of silence before we begin the second round. The second round is meant to help us move towards a group response. Each person will have 2 minutes to name what struck you in a new way as you listened.

Finally, we will move to our third round of conversation where we are invited to name what has emerged during our conversation and what we would like to include in our group response.

We will now begin with our first round. Again, we will take each of the 3 questions one at a time and each person will have 2 minutes to offer their thoughts and reflections on the question. Anyone can begin, but then we will continue moving counterclockwise. I would invite you to listen attentively to what each person is saying. You are most welcome to take a few notes while others are speaking. I will be taking notes as well to help in writing our final response.

I invite you to take a minute of silence now to collect your thoughts. *[Silence for one minute]*

1st round of Sharing (Question 1):

The first questions are:

- After having read and prayed with the DCS, what resonates most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent?
- Which experiences are new, or illuminating to you?

[After everyone has spoken:]

Let's pause for **1 minute** in silence to absorb what has been shared and to listen to the Holy Spirit in our midst.

1st round of Sharing (Question 2):

The second questions are:

- After having read and prayed with the DCS, what significant tensions or differences emerge as particularly important in your continent's perspective?
- Consequently, what are the questions or issues that should be addressed and

considered in the next steps of the process?

[After everyone has spoken:]

Let's pause for 1 minute in silence to absorb what has been shared and to listen to the Holy Spirit in our midst. Consider what is resonating the most for you? What was particularly powerful in what has already been shared?

1st round of Sharing (Question 3):

The third questions are:

- What priorities, recurring themes and calls to action are emerging in our conversation?
- What should be discussed during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023 in Rome?

[After everyone has spoken:]

Let's pause for 1 more minute in silence to collect your thoughts and consider all that has touched you or resonated with you during this time of reflection we have shared together.

2nd round of Sharing:

Now we will begin our second round of sharing. Anyone can begin and then we will continue Clockwise. You will have 2 minutes each. I will let know when you have 30 seconds left.

The Question for this second round is:

**What resonated most for you? What was most powerful?
What touched you?**

[After everyone has spoken:]

Let's pause for a few moments to reflect on what seems to be converging or emerging as

we consider our journey together as Church. *[Silence for one minute]*

3rd round of Sharing:

We will now begin our final round of sharing. Anyone can begin and anyone who feels moved can follow.

The question for this last round is:

After considering the DCS and reflecting on the US Church today in light of our conversation, what should be included in our group response?

Naming the Graces and Closing Prayer:

During this conversation, we have shared rich experiences of faith. We have discussed our shared journey together as Church and how we might do so even more faithfully in the years to come. In thanksgiving for the gift that this conversation has been, I invite you to think of a specific grace you received or an insight you gained from this experience.

(Pause)

I now invite anyone to share a grace received or an insight gained.

(Give all a chance to respond)

**Thank you for your responses and for all that you have shared.
We will now close with prayer.**

Lord Jesus,

**We give you thanks and praise for gathering us here
today and for speaking to us.**

**Give us the grace to live in communion with you and with each
other, to participate in the life of your Church,
and to advance your mission in the world.**

**May all we say and do be guided by your Spirit,
and may this Synod bear much fruit in your Church.**

We ask this in your most holy name.

Amen.