



Synod
2021
2024

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission
Pour une Église synodale



CANADIAN CONFERENCE
OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS



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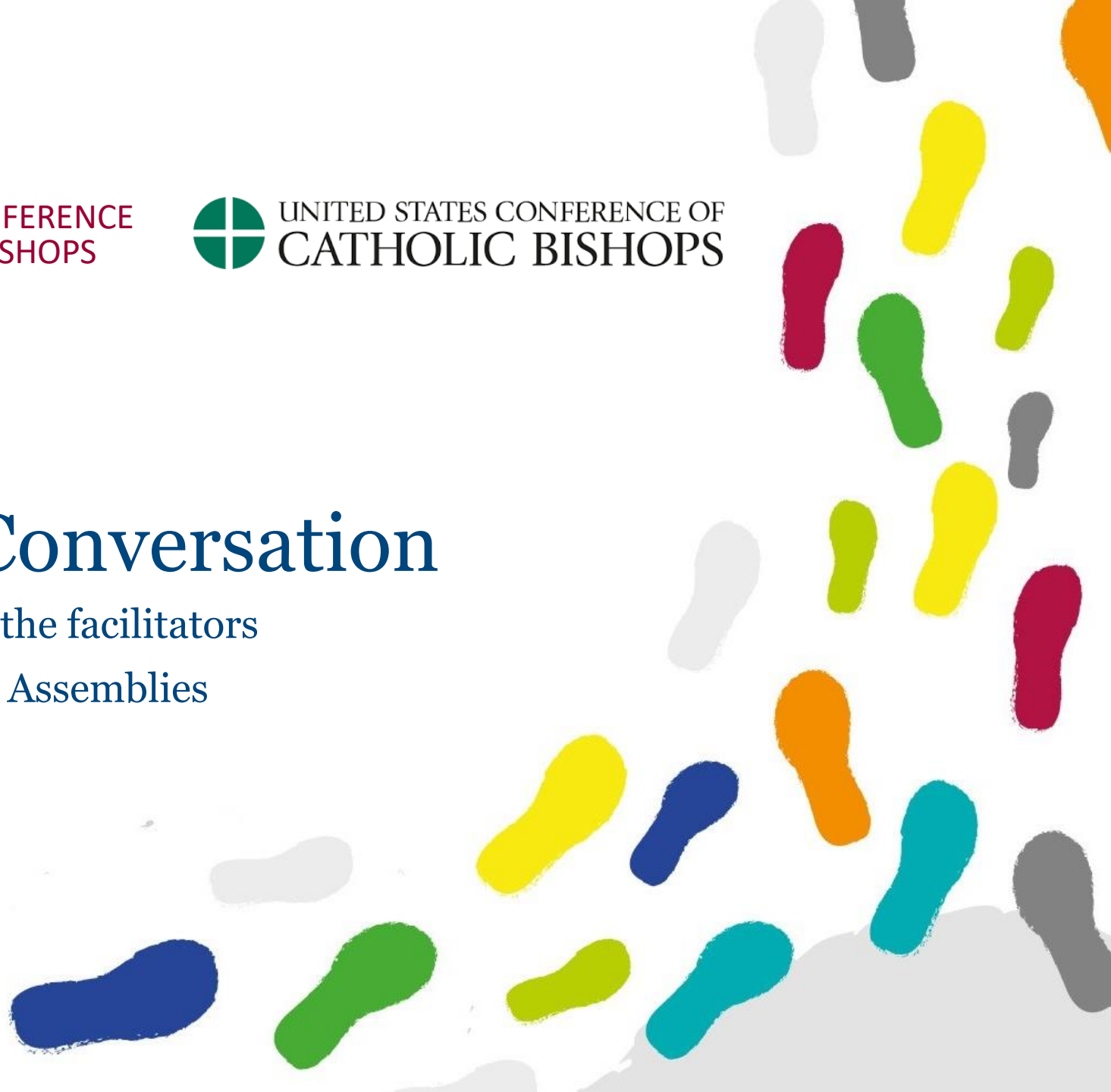
Spiritual Conversation

Training session for the facilitators
of Continental Stage Assemblies

January 5, 2023



Service for Discernment in Common
Service pour le Discernement en Commun



The Service for Discernment in Common



- Established in March 2019
- A service of the Jesuit Province of Canada
- Assisting religious communities and apostolates with communal discernment processes = synodal processes
- Trainings, workshops, facilitation of communal discernment processes...



Sr. Laurence Loubières, xmcj

Examples of missions

Jesuit Province
Congregation de Notre-Dame
Ignatian Spirituality Project
Christian Life Community
Conference Religieuse Canadienne
Ignatian Spirituality Centre of Montreal



Agenda

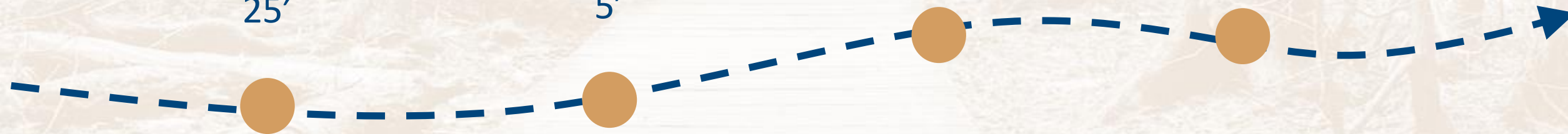


Presentation
25'

Personal
reflection
5'

Practice in
small groups
45'

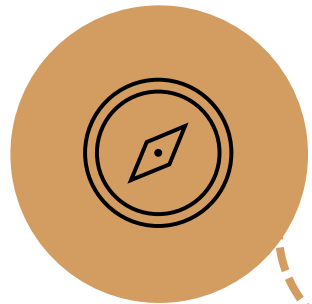
Feedback
in large group
15'





In this presentation you will learn about

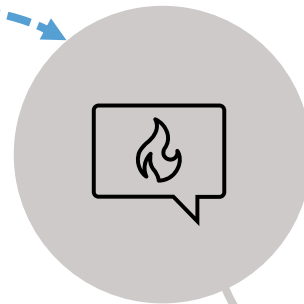
1. Foundations of spiritual conversation



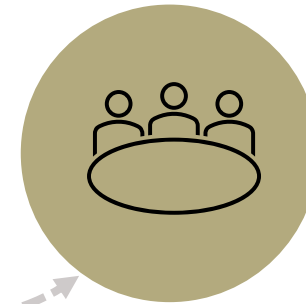
2. The assembly process



3. How to begin



4. How to facilitate the rounds of sharing



5. What to pay attention to



1. Spiritual Conversation



- The Holy Spirit is at work in the heart of every person, in every group, in every circumstance
- Spiritual conversation creates the conditions for a group to open up to the Spirit's inspiration and to make decisions accordingly
- It is a structured process of talking and listening
- It involves **active listening** and **speaking from the heart**
- It requires being attentive to spiritual movements in oneself and in the group interactions
- It is an essential component of the synodal process and is used in the Listening Circles



The structure is at the service of a deep and shared listening. We are attuning ourselves to one another and to the Spirit at work in us and in the group.

Moving from “me” to “we”



From my prayer....

...to what emerges from what we shared



1st round

Fruits of my prayer

During the first round, participants share the fruit of their personal prayer and reflection

2nd round

What touches me the most in what I heard

During the second round, the sharing is about what touched me the most in what I heard during the first round

3rd round

What converges, emerges from our conversation

During the third round, the sharing is about what emerges from our conversation

Spiritual conversation promotes the values on which it is grounded





Leading a spiritual conversation

- The facilitator invites participants to take turns sharing: clockwise for example, or in a predetermined order if online
- Only the person who is invited to speak can speak if it's online, the others listen with their microphone on mute
- Each person has a similar amount of time to share (for example 3 minutes)
- Participants share at the level of their personal experience and not about general considerations, beginning their sentences with "I felt...", "What came to me was...", "I experienced.... "
- Participants do not reply to each other and do not "add" to what has already been said
- It is possible to remain silent and refrain from sharing
- Maintain an attitude of respect, listening to what is going on in yourself and in others, and listening to the Spirit





2- The assembly process

- 12 virtual assemblies - 7 in English, 3 in Spanish, 2 in French
- About 100 participants on zoom - 2.5 hours
- Listening Circles of 6-8 participants in breakout rooms
 - Each group has a facilitator to keep time and to ensure everyone has a chance to share
 - Each group has a representative that will report the fruits of the conversation to the Plenary
- Part I
 - Welcome & Prayer (5 mins)
 - Framing Listening Circles (5 mins)
 - **Listening Circles = Spiritual Conversation (70 mins)**
- Part II
 - Reflection & Silence (5 mins)
 - Plenary (50 mins)
 - Closing & Prayer (5 mins)

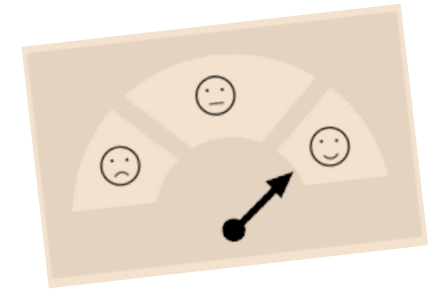
Questions for participants to prepare beforehand

1. What **aspects of the *Document for the Continental Stage* resonated** with what you heard in your diocesan and/or regional listening sessions?
2. The DCS reports some tensions as well as some joy; **what substantial tensions or divergences emerge** as particularly important for the Church in North America?
3. From what you heard and read, **what are the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action** that can be shared with other local Churches around the world and discussed during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023?



3. Getting started

- During the first 5 minutes
- Greet participants and propose them to start with a quick round of check-in, asking participants to state their **name, diocese**, and to describe **in one word the emotional state** they are in at that moment (peaceful, anxious, excited, calm...)
 - This allows to welcome everyone in the circle just as they are
 - This also prevents strong emotions from taking over and potentially disrupting the flow of the conversation
- Explain you will wave your hand visibly 30 seconds before the end of the time limit
 - If participants have 3 minutes to share, raise your hand at 2:30 to let the person know that his or her time will soon be up
 - If you feel this will be too much for you to handle, ask a volunteer to do it
- Explain that the group representative will write down **only after the 3rd round** what the participants have decided to report on : **insights / tensions / perspectives**
- Announce in which order you will call participants to share:
“We will start with Peter, then Mary, then Susan ...” and keep the same order for all rounds





4. Facilitating the spiritual conversation

Groups of 6 to 8 persons

Round of check-in + announcements : time-keeping, reporting, order of sharing	5 minutes
Round 1: Invite participants to share what they have prepared about the fruits of their personal prayer on the questions proposed	3 minutes each → 18 to 24 minutes
Invite participants to take a moment of silence to reflect on and write down what touched them most about what they heard in the first round.	2 minutes
Round 2: Invite participants to share what touched them most in Round 1	2 minutes each → 12 to 16 minutes
Pause again to reflect on what seems to converge or emerge in common at this point in the conversation	2 minutes
Round 3: Invite participants to share what seems to be converging or emerging at this point (direction, theme, insight, invitation from the Lord...)	1 minute each → 6 to 8 minutes
When the third round is over, agree on what the representative will report to the larger group afterwards (2 or 3 themes and brief reflection) in terms of 1/insights from the DCS, 2/tensions for Church in NA and 3/ perspectives	Remaining time 13 to 25 minutes



Between
45 and 57
minutes

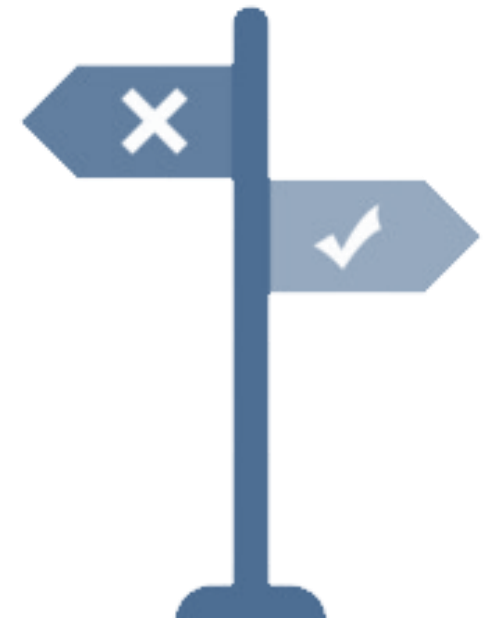
Total time
70 minutes



5. What to pay attention to during the meeting

- Especially during and after the second round of spiritual conversation
 - Presence or absence of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26)

 - Signs that the group is in consolation
 - Group is truly committed to active listening and participation
 - A common awareness, a consensus, a shared truth give energy and joy to the participants
 - There is a sense of a greater communion, benevolence, appreciation between the participants
- The group is getting closer to God and following the movement of the Spirit
- Signs that the group is going through desolation
 - Decrease in energy, a disengagement of participants, a lack of listening and participation
 - Feelings of fear, avoidance, decreased confidence and openness, feeling blocked
 - Imposition of personal agendas, competition...
- The group is moving away from God at this time
and participants need to refocus on what they are trying to accomplish together



Personal prayer time



- Ask the Lord to show you a consoling event in your Church-related life in the last few weeks or months: something that gave you an increased sense of hope, energy, trust in God, and why this was so.
- Prepare something in writing to share in the small group.



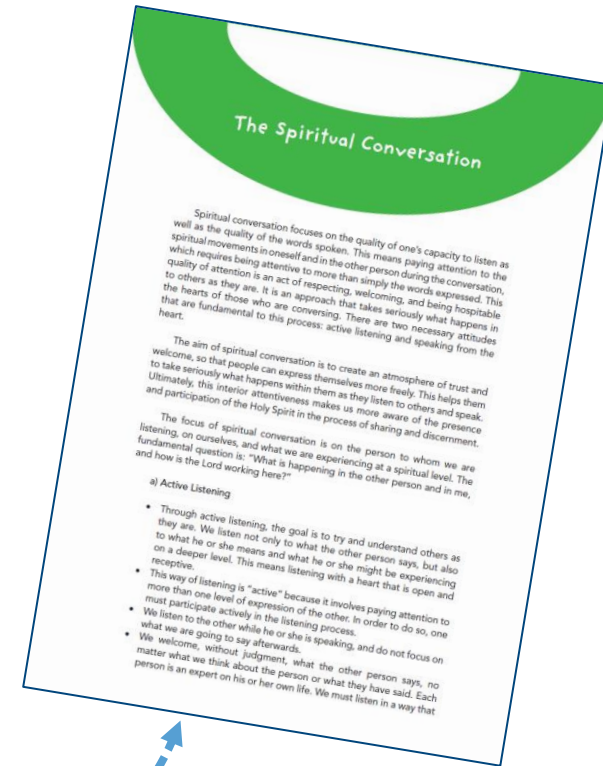
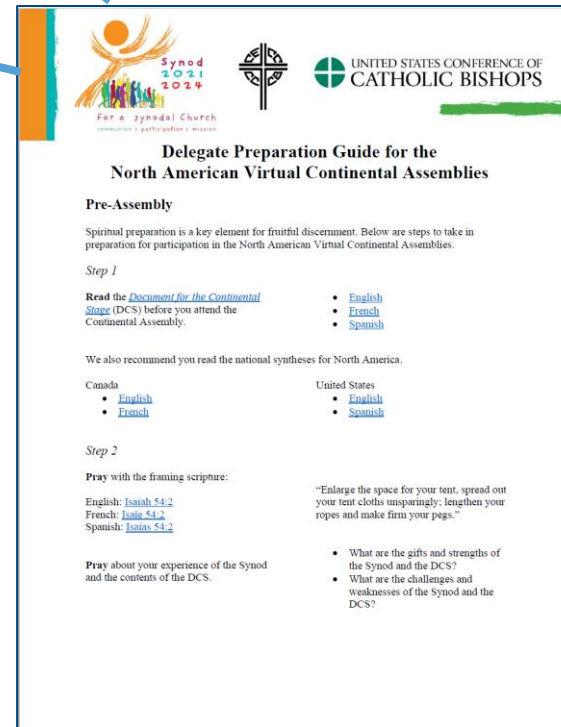
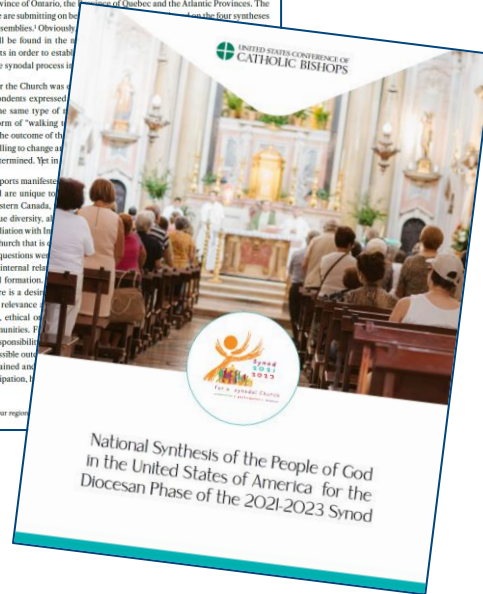


Timing of the small group conversation

- In each group, a volunteer will be the facilitator
- 5 minutes for checking-in
- 12 minutes for the 1st round – (2' per person x 6 = 12')
- 2 minutes to reflect on what touched me the most in the first round
- 12 minutes for the 2nd round – (2' per person x 6 = 12')
- 2 minutes to reflect on what seems to be converging, emerging from our conversation
- 6 minutes for the 3rd round - (1' per person)



Documents for your preparation



Enlarge the space for your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly; lengthen your ropes and make firm your pegs. Isaiah 54,2



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Blessings on your synodal assemblies !

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