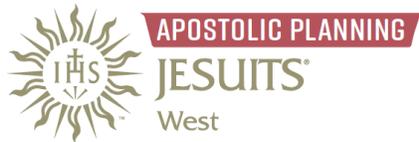


CONVERSATION AND CONSULTATION, FALL 2022

Guides to Spiritual Conversation Jesuit Communities

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CONVERSATION AND CONSULTATION, FALL 2022

Spiritual Conversation Convener Guide

Jesuit Communities

The Convener is responsible for organizing and overseeing the apostolic planning spiritual conversations within your Jesuit community.

Background

In his letter of July 28, 2022, initiating an apostolic planning process for the Jesuits West Province, Fr. Sean Carroll, S.J., provincial, invited Jesuits and Partners in Mission to stop, look around and notice the ways that God is present and at work in our ministries, and to consider the ways God continues to call us and guide us in our work. By doing so, he suggested, we are looking into God's heart to discern where we are being invited to go. It is this invitation that is at the very heart of our apostolic planning.

This fall the province is inviting Jesuits and colleagues to engage in this kind of reflection and discernment in conversation with one another. Throughout the province - in Jesuit communities, in apostolic works sponsored by or affiliated with the province, and among women and men who share a commitment to the mission of the Society of Jesus – conversation groups are being convened to reflect on God's presence and call in ways that will inform and shape the apostolic planning process.

The Spiritual Conversation

The model presented here is an adaptation of a method for spiritual conversation that is part of the process for Communal Apostolic Discernment developed by teams of spiritual directors in the Province of Canada over the past several decades. It is a method that is increasingly being used throughout the Society of Jesus worldwide, and was employed at a pivotal moment by the delegates at General Congregation XXXVI.

You may recognize this as the methodology employed for the spiritual conversations that took place in Jesuit communities last year as part of the Examen on the Vow of Poverty.

For further background, you may download the Toolkit for Communal Apostolic Discernment, published by the Jesuits of Canada, at <https://www.christianlifecommunity.ca/wordpress/> and clicking on the Communal Discernment Toolkit link.

An overview of this method of spiritual conversation, excerpted from the Toolkit, is appended here.

Practicalities

It is desirable that all members of your community, whether members of the Province or not, participate in a conversation.

Many Jesuits will also be invited to participate in a similar conversation with colleagues at their apostolic work; because there are important ways these conversations will differ from the conversations in Jesuit communities, Jesuits are encouraged to participate in both.

The optimal number of participants in a conversation is six or eight; conversations of six will require 60 minutes; conversations of eight will require 75 minutes. In the end, your local circumstances will determine the number of participants and number of conversation groups in your community, but, in all cases, please be sure that enough time is given for completion of the process. You may wish to consult the time allocation chart below for guidance.

Conversations among fewer than six people, even dialogues between two people, will also work well using this model.

Each conversation group needs a facilitator and a reporter; these are appointed from among the participants.

Since no two Jesuit communities are alike, convenors are encouraged to adapt the structure and process to best fit your local needs and circumstances. However, in doing so it is important to maintain fidelity to:

- the questions for reflection and sharing
- conversation grounded in *active listening* and *intentional speaking* (see appended excerpt from the Toolkit).

Please provide the following to community members in advance of the meeting:

- 1) The Participant Guide and July 28th letter from Sean Carroll to all.
- 2) The Facilitator Guide to the facilitator only.
- 3) The Reporter Guide to the reporter only.

Conversations may take place any time before December 10, 2022. and reports should be submitted no later than December 16, 2022

Guidelines for Time Distribution (approximate)

	6 Participants	8 Participants
Opening Reflection and Prayer	3 minutes	3 minutes
Check-in	5 minutes	5 minutes
Sharing I	22 minutes	28 minutes
Sharing II	18 minutes	22 minutes
Review	12 minutes	12 minutes



CONVERSATION AND CONSULTATION, FALL 2022

Spiritual Conversation Participant Guide

Jesuit Communities

Background

In his letter of July 28, 2022 initiating an apostolic planning process for the Jesuits West Province, Fr. Sean Carroll, S.J., provincial, invited Jesuits and Partners in Mission to stop, look around and notice the ways that God is present and at work in our ministries, and to consider the ways God continues to call us and guide us in our work. By doing so, he suggested, we are looking into God's heart to discern where we are being invited to go. It is this invitation that is at the very heart of our apostolic planning.

This fall the province is inviting Jesuits and colleagues to engage in this kind of reflection and discernment in conversation with one another. Throughout the province - in Jesuit communities, in apostolic works sponsored by or affiliated with the province, and among women and men who share a commitment to the mission of the Society of Jesus – conversation groups are being convened to reflect on God's presence and call in ways that will inform and shape the apostolic planning process.

Participation in a conversation group will involve the following:

- Pre-meeting personal reflection on the topic for conversation
- Participation in a facilitated 60-75 minute small group conversation with colleagues
- An opportunity for participation in a second small group conversation in early 2023

A report summarizing the principal themes of your conversation will be prepared by a group member and submitted to the apostolic planning steering committee. These reports will also be compiled and posted online (without attribution and with controlled access) for review and further reflection by Jesuits and colleagues. The Committee will process these reports in January 2023, and will use this information to recommend the next steps in the planning.

Preparation

In the days prior to your small group conversation, please set aside some quiet time for reflection. Specifically:

1. Read and reflect upon Sean Carroll's letter of July 28, 2022 that accompanies this guide, noting any thoughts or questions that come to mind as you do so.
2. Then turn your attention and imagination to your own ministry, and the people with and for whom you minister, focusing especially on those times when you have experienced or witnessed joy, hope and consolation in the ministry. Then reflect on these questions:
 - a. Where and in what ways do I see the Spirit present and moving in my ministry, and among the people with and for whom I minister?
 - b. How do I hear the Spirit calling our Province to Minister to the People of God: what opportunities might the Spirit be inviting us to pursue; what future do I imagine and desire for the Province and its ministries?
 - c. What obstacles might we face in pursuing this future, and how might we face these obstacles?

3. Either during or following this reflection, you may wish to jot down some notes on your responses. These will be helpful as you consider what from your reflection you would like to share with others.
4. Finally, in his letter, the provincial calls this a “pivotal moment” for discerning the apostolic future of the province. As you prepare for your sharing, it might be helpful if you to consider what, if anything, you consider “pivotal” about this moment.

Small Group Conversation

Your small group conversation will be facilitated by a member of your community, and will follow this format:

1. Opening Reflection and Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth. Amen.

2. Check-in

3. **Sharing I:** Each group member is invited to share what they wish from the fruits of their preparatory reflection. While one member is sharing, others listen attentively, noting what they are hearing and feeling, and withholding any response to the sharing.

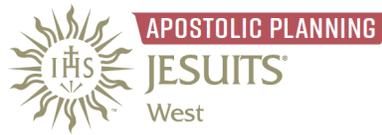
4. **Sharing II:** Each group member is invited to share their experience of listening to others:

- a. What did I hear?
- b. Was I struck by any common themes?
- c. Is there something I expected to hear, but did not?
- d. Was I especially moved or touched by something someone said?
- e. Where did I experience harmony or resonance with others as they shared? Where did I experience dissonance?
- f. Did any insights occur to me?

5. **Review:** Group members are invited to look back on the whole conversation and note the principal themes of the sharing, paying attention especially to areas of strong convergence, and any notable differences in perspective. The group might then ask: what movements of the Spirit did we experience or recognize?

Follow-Up

1. Your group recorder will write a summary report on your meeting, drawing from the conclusions reached during the **Review** of the meeting. You will receive a copy of this report. The report will be sent, as well, to the steering committee, and posted online (without attribution and with controlled access), along with reports from other conversations, for review and further reflection.
2. After having reflected on your conversation and read your group report, you may wish to make additional comments about meeting. You may do so by accessing the comment form at: [Spiritual Conversation - Participant Feedback Form](#)
3. You will also be invited to participate in a follow-up conversation in your Jesuit community in early 2023 to review and reflect upon the steering committee’s processing these fall conversations.



CONVERSATION AND CONSULTATION, FALL 2022

Spiritual Conversation Facilitator Guide Jesuit Communities

The facilitator is responsible for facilitating the conversation, and engaging as a regular participant.

Facilitating the Small Group Conversation

Below is an annotated participant guide for the small group conversation. Text from the guide is in black; facilitator notes and materials are italicized and in purple.

Small Group Conversation Guide

With Notes for Facilitators

1. Opening Reflection and Prayer

Welcome and thank participants.

Invite participants to begin with quiet reflection on the following scripture passages (read by you or your designee).

Jeremiah 29: 11-12

For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope.

When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you.

(pause)

Deuteronomy 30: 11-14

For the law I am laying down for you today is neither obscure for you nor beyond your reach.

It is not in heaven, so that you may need to wonder, "Who will go up to heaven for us and bring it down to us so that we can hear it and practice it?"

Nor is it beyond the seas, so that you may need to wonder, "Who will cross the seas for us and bring it back to us so that we can hear and practice it?"

No, the word is very near to you. It is in your mouth and in your heart for you to put into practice.

After a brief period of quiet reflection on the scripture, invite participants to recite this prayer together (included in Participant Guide)

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people.

And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

And you will renew the face of the earth. Amen.

2. Check-in

Moving around the circle, ask participants to check in briefly using these or similar questions; you may wish to give them a few brief moments to reflect on and prepare their responses before beginning.

- a. *How are you doing as you come into this meeting?*
- b. *Where would your attention be, or what would you be doing, if you were not here right now?*

3. Sharing I: Each group member is invited to share what they wish from the fruits of their preparatory reflection. While one member is sharing, others listen attentively, noting what they are hearing and feeling, and withholding any response to the sharing.

Remind participants of the three reflection questions:

- a. *Where and in what ways do I see the Spirit present and moving in my ministry, and among the people with and for whom I minister?*
- b. *How do I hear the Spirit calling our Province to Minister to the People of God: what opportunities might the Spirit be inviting us to pursue; what future do I imagine and desire for the Province and its ministries?*
- c. *What obstacles might we face in pursuing this future, and how might we face these obstacles?*

Give participants a few moments to recall their reflection and what they have decided to share with the group.

Invite participants to share, in turn, what they wish from their reflection, keeping these guidelines in mind:

- a. *Participants share only once in this round.*
- b. *The sharing should be focused only on the participant's own reflection prior to the meeting; ask participants to refrain from commenting on what others have said, or from adding to their reflection based on what they have heard others say.*
- c. *Participants ought to listen attentively, with "fresh ears" and curious minds, and without any sort of filtering or judgment.*
- d. *Participants ought to refrain from making any comments except when engaged in their own sharing,*
- e. *Sharing may be done in order, moving around the circle; the facilitator may choose to begin or may ask someone else to begin. An alternative method is to allow people to share "at will," but note that additional time may be needed for this since pauses between sharing will likely be greater.*
- f. *Participants may pass when moving around the circle; after all others have shared, return to those who have passed to ask if they would now like to share.*
- g. *When all have had an opportunity to share, thank them, and then invite them to reflect quietly for a few moments on what they have heard from one another (see question prompts below).*

4. Sharing II: Each group member is invited to share their experience of listening to others:

- a. What did I hear?
- b. Was I struck by any common themes?
- c. Is there something I expected to hear, but did not?
- d. Was I especially moved or touched by something someone said?
- e. Where did I experience harmony or resonance with others as they shared? Where did I experience dissonance?
- f. Did any insights occur to me?

After a period of quiet reflection on the question prompts, ask participants to share their experience of listening to one another. NB: the above questions are prompts to aid their reflection, not a “laundry list;” there is no need or expectation for anyone to respond to all the questions.

In this round, the same procedures and “rules” apply as in round one, with these additions:

- 1) Participants should not use this time to add to or clarify anything they said in the first round; the sole focus is on the experience of listening to others.*
- 2) Participants should refrain from challenging, disputing or judging in any way what they heard from others. While differences may be noted, they ought not to be judged or “litigated.”*

- 5. Review:** Group members are invited to look back on the whole conversation and note the principal themes of the sharing, paying attention especially to areas of strong convergence, and any notable differences in perspective. The group might then ask: what movements of the Spirit did we experience or recognize?

Invite participants to reflect quietly for a few moments on the conversation as a whole.

- 1. What notable themes emerged in our conversation?*
- 2. Where did we find strong convergence in our perspectives?*
- 3. What notable differences in perspective are there among us?*
- 4. What movements of the Spirit did we experience or recognize?*
- 5. To further the apostolic planning, what are the most important things the steering committee should know about our conversation.*

Invite participants to share their responses at will, that is, allow people to add their response freely from the floor, but ask that they not speak a second time until all have had an opportunity to speak.

When all have said what they wish, open the floor for a conversation seeking and leading to agreement on what they believe should be included in the report to the steering committee, understanding that the report form invites responses to the four questions above.

This period should not be used to argue positions, reconcile differences, tie up loose ends, or introduce new information. It is simply to come to an honest review and shared report on the principal features of the conversation preceding.

Inform participants that the reporter will provide group members a copy of the report when completed.

Remind participants that they may offer additional individual comments using the link found in their participant guide.

Thank them for their participation, and remind them that they will be invited to participate in a follow-up conversation in early 2023 to review and reflect upon the steering committee’s reflection on and processing of these fall conversations.

Guidelines for Time Distribution (approximate)

	Six Participants	Eight Participants
Opening Reflections and Prayer	3 minutes	3 minutes
Check-in	5 minutes	6 minutes
Sharing I	22 minutes	30 minutes
Sharing II	18 minutes	24 minutes
Review	12 minutes	12 minutes



CONVERSATION AND CONSULTATION, FALL 2022

Spiritual Conversation Reporter Guide

The reporter is responsible for submitting a meeting report to the apostolic planning steering committee following the completion of the conversation. The reporter is also the contact person should the steering committee have questions about the report.

Report Content

- 1) **Jesuit Community**
- 2) **Date of Meeting**
- 3) **Name of Facilitator**
- 4) **Facilitator Email Address**
- 5) **Name of Reporter**
- 6) **Reporter Email Address**
- 7) **Number of Participants**
- 8) **A Brief Description of the Composition of the Group** (i.e., the mix of ministries and generations represented, and anything else you think might be helpful to describe the make-up of the group)
- 9) What **notable themes** emerged in your conversation?
- 10) What were the **areas of strong convergence** in the perspectives of the participants?
- 11) What were the **notable differences** in the perspectives of the participants?
- 12) What do participants believe are the **most important** things the steering committee ought to know about your conversation?

Please make your report is simple and direct: refrain from explaining or providing examples, unless doing so is critical to providing context and understanding, and provide only enough information so that the meaning of each point is clear to the committee.

Gathering Information and Submitting the Report

- 1) For the **## 9–12** above, the information included in the report should be gathered during the **Review** portion of the meeting, when the conversation will center on these questions. It is only during this discussion that you ought to take notes; please do not take notes during the earlier portions of the meeting.
- 2) Please circulate a copy of the report to all participants.
- 3) Please submit the report to the committee using the online form at: [Spiritual Conversation - Jesuit Community Report Form](#)

Spiritual conversation and communal discernment

While spiritual conversation can explicitly treat spiritual topics, it mainly concerns the quality of listening and the quality of speaking. Spiritual conversation is about paying attention to the spiritual movements both in oneself and in the other participants. Such a quality of attention is an act of reverence and hospitality for oneself and for others. Spiritual conversation creates an atmosphere of trust and welcome. It allows all parties to express themselves frankly. It allows all parties to take seriously whatever is going on within each participant.

The purpose of small group spiritual conversation is to strengthen the communion of hearts and minds, not to be confused with unanimity of opinion, so that the group may become a more discerning group, that it may discover how the Spirit of Christ is active in the group.

Two basic skills or practices make up spiritual conversation: active listening and intentional speaking.

First Round: Personal Sharing

Active listening:

The goal of active listening is to understand others as they are. Such listening is called “active” because it involves paying attention to more than one level of expression of the other. It involves listening not only to what the other person is saying, but also to what they mean to say, and to what they might be experiencing interiorly. This listening is a profound welcome of the other person in his or her radical uniqueness. This intentional welcome is rooted in the expectation that the Spirit is speaking with us through the other person.

Active listening means welcoming non-judgmentally whatever the person says, no matter what you think about what is being said, or what you think about the person. Each person is an expert in his or her own experience. One listens from the point of view of the Presupposition of the Spiritual Exercises, that is, to be “more ready to put a good interpretation on another’s statement than to condemn it as false” (*Spiritual Exercises* n.22). Through active listening you offer to others the profound gift of taking them seriously.

When you are not speaking, active listening is your main role. Please do not comment in any way on what another has said, not even to say something positive like “I agree with so-and-so”. Such comment or “cross talk” at this stage may inadvertently cause someone to change what they intended to say, or feel that this is not a safe place to speak freely.

Active listening means allowing oneself to be affected by the other. Active listening is demanding, for it requires humility, openness, patience and involvement. It means listening to the other now as he or she is speaking, and not concentrating on what one will say next.

Intentional speaking:

The goal of intentional speaking is to express one's experience, feelings and thoughts. Intentional speaking is based in a habit of listening actively to oneself. This inner self-awareness then guides how one engages in the conversation, sharing the truth as one sees or experiences it and remaining free of selfish motivations in what one says. This self-awareness gives one's speaking its "intentional" character.

When speaking, try not to let your sharing be influenced by what another has said, and do not try to influence other's sharing by how you express your own sharing.

Intentional speaking means taking responsibility not only for what one says, but also for what one feels. By not blaming the other for what you are feeling, you keep the exchange transparent.

Intentional speaking is a free, generous gift to another, in reciprocity for being actively listened to.

Second Round: Reflective Sharing

The leader invites the members to share what they heard and how they were affected by what they heard.

What did you hear?

Were you struck by a common theme?

Is something you expected to hear absent?

Where did you experience harmony/dissonance with the others as they shared?

What emotions are you feeling now?

What insights occur to you?

The second round enables the group to notice what is happening spiritually to them through the conversation. These reflective responses begin to manifest the communal movements of spirits in the group. These responses are essential data if the spiritual conversation is to take on a communal discernment character.

Third Round: Discussion

In this round, the group seeks to name the spiritual movements they have recognized on the basis of the second round sharing. Here the mode of exchange can be more discussion-like than in the previous two rounds.

From: "COMMUNAL APOSTOLIC DISCERNMENT: A TOOLKIT" (CDA)

July 28, 2022

Dear Brothers and Partners in Mission:

I hope that you are all enjoying the summer.

As you may know, last month I delivered an address on the state of the province at our congregation in Spokane. I spoke about the fact that we are at a pivotal moment in the history of our still-young Jesuits West Province and asked that we engage in apostolic planning to look together into God's heart, to discern where we, as Jesuits and lay collaborators, are being invited to go.

Why is this a pivotal moment? What might happen if we missed this opportunity to engage in prayer and conversation with one another to discern the path upon which God is calling and sending us?

At the core of our Ignatian identity is the experience of being missioned in a union of minds and hearts. We are called to generous service that gives life — both to ourselves and to others. In doing so, our hearts look to the Lord to lead us, guide us and labor with us. We do this as individual men and women, and we do this as a body. But given the many demands of our good and vital work, it can be easy to begin losing sight of the Lord. It is then that we know that we must stop, look around and notice how he is present and at work.

When I look at our province, I see how busy we are with so many good ministries. We do extraordinary work that reveals Christ to our world, even as the resources of the province itself, both human and temporal, are diminishing. I believe we do so because, even in this diminishment, we are richer than ever in the ways that we share the abundance of our Ignatian spiritual heritage and in the deep commitment to partnership in ministry we live out every day.

At the same time, we cannot take any of this for granted. For if we do, we could soon find ourselves losing sight of the Lord. So, we must be intentional and deliberate in discerning how the Lord is calling us: to find life and grace in our diminishment on the one hand; and to bring even greater life through our spiritual heritage and partnerships on the other. If we fail to do this now, we will soon — too soon — find ourselves walking down paths where the Lord is no longer so evident to us, not because he is not there, but because we have forgotten how to recognize him and listen to him. We would then begin a time of wandering — losing our way, stumbling along, feeling the darkness closing in upon us, becoming afraid and uncertain, and, finally, losing that unity and sense of mission that define us.

Therefore, I am inviting each of you to participate in our apostolic planning process, which will be a time of listening to the Lord together. It will be grounded in Ignatian discernment, the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs), our charism and our context. Apostolic planning invites us, and I am inviting you, to let go of long-held assumptions and practices, to look anew for the Lord, to respond generously to his invitation, and to allow our hearts to be transformed.

On a practical level, over the coming year you may be asked to engage in spiritual conversations, participate in a one-on-one interview, serve as a facilitator or a listener, or assist in some other capacity. Please be generous with your time and approach this process with spiritual freedom, hope and imagination. I know there will be many graces along the way, not the least of which is the unity that will come from our shared work and sense of purpose. Thank you in advance for your prayerful participation and assistance.

I am grateful to Province Treasurer Ed Fassett, SJ, for serving as my delegate for apostolic planning and agreeing to manage what will be a 12 to 15-month process. Ed will be assisted by our consultant, Charlie Kelley, who led the then-U.S. Assistancy through its own strategic discernment in 2005.

How we embark on this prayerful province journey, this broad consultative endeavor, will be the task of the 12 members of our Steering Committee. A diverse group of Jesuit and lay partners, the Steering Committee members will help shape and oversee this critically important work. This will be a time and labor-intensive project, and I want to thank the committee members for their generous yes to my call. Please see the attachment to this letter for a list of the Steering Committee members and the organizations they represent.

Following is our expected timeline:

Fall of 2022: Conversation and Consultation

The Steering Committee will meet for the first time at the Curia in Portland next month from August 14 – 16. Following that meeting, we will begin an intensive period of conversation and consultation that will take place in our works, in our communities and perhaps regionally. This portion of the timeline is geared toward information gathering, research and facilitated conversations.

January – May 2023: Deliberations and Discernment

In the second semester, we move into a period of deliberations and information processing, where we will ask for input as we begin to consider different paths to take. The Steering Committee will assess information received (data, research, consultations, etc.) and craft the key apostolic questions for deliberation. At the conclusion of this period, the Steering Committee will process responses into a draft apostolic plan that will be submitted to me.

June 2023: Draft Plan & Response

In June of 2023, our intention is to present a draft plan to the province and invite your responses. In the next several weeks, I will provide more details on how we plan to do this.

Summer of 2023: Final Preparation

Next summer, I will work with the Provincial Assistants, who comprise my Cabinet, and representatives of each sector of the province to develop a final plan.

Fall of 2023: Approval of the Apostolic Plan

After approval, we will submit the plan to Jesuit Superior General Arturo Sosa, SJ, for his consideration and approval. Once approved by Fr. General, we will begin a process of carefully planned implementation.

In the coming weeks and months, I will reach out again with progress reports. We plan to establish a dedicated web page where we will post updates, reflections and more specifics about this process.

In just a few days, we will celebrate the feast of St. Ignatius, which also marks the conclusion of the Ignatian Year, the Society's worldwide commemoration of seminal moments in our history. As we thank God for our past, we look to the future and to the prayer and spiritual conversations that will animate our apostolic planning. Though we do not yet know where God is leading us, we know that we will walk this path together, growing in relationship, in trust and with a clearer sense of how we are being called to serve the people of God.

With prayers for all of you and for the work we now begin.

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sean Carroll, SJ', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sean Carroll, SJ
Provincial