



Spiritual Conversation 2026

Module I Handout

Quotations from our input sessions on Module 1.

St Ignatius (16th Century)

We do not preach but we do speak familiarly of spiritual things with some people, as one does after dinner, with those who invite us.

- Be slow to speak
- Listen attentively
- Be generous in time-giving and interest
- Seek the truth in what others are saying
- Disagree humbly, respectfully, and thoughtfully
- Don't be too attached to my own opinion or taking sides

(We might add a lightness of touch to this list...)

Pope Francis - *Evangelii Gaudium* – The Joy of the Gospel (2013)

The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life. Although it sounds obvious, spiritual accompaniment must lead others ever closer to God, in whom we attain true freedom. [169]

We need to practice the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives. [171]

Pope Francis - 50th World Communication Day 2016

Listening is never easy. Many times it is easier to play deaf. Listening means paying attention, wanting to understand, to value, to respect and to ponder what the other person says. It involves a sort of martyrdom or self-sacrifice, as we try to imitate Moses before the burning bush: we have to remove our sandals when standing on the "holy ground" of our encounter with the one who speaks to me (cf. Ex 3:5). Knowing how to listen is an immense grace, it is a gift which we need to ask for and then make every effort to practice.

Pope Francis - Homily 31 Dec 2019

We are called to encounter the others and to listen to their life stories, their cry for help. Listening is already an act of love! Having time for others, to enter into dialogue, recognizing with a contemplative gaze the presence and action of God in their lives, to bear witness with actions more than with words to the new life of the Gospel is truly a service of love that changes reality.

Philip Endean SJ

On the road to Emmaus Jesus doesn't tell the two travellers where to start, he invites them to share where they are. And he gradually leads them to become aware that they already possess more than they realise. And so, their hearts begin to burn within them even before they grasp that the Risen Lord is the third person in the conversation. Emmaus is the gold standard of Spiritual Conversation.

Metropolitan Anthony Bloom of Sourozh

Unless we look at a person and see the beauty there is in this person, we can contribute nothing to him. One does not help a person by discerning what is wrong, what is ugly, what is distorted. Christ looked at everyone he met, at the prostitute, at the thief, and saw the beauty hidden there. Perhaps it was distorted, perhaps damaged, but it was beauty none the less, and what he did was to call out this beauty. Every one of us is in the image of God, and every one of us is like a damaged icon. But if we were given an icon damaged by time, damaged by circumstances, or desecrated by human hatred, we would treat it with reverence, with tenderness, with broken heartedness. We would concentrate on what is left of its beauty, and not on what is lost of its beauty. We must learn to look and look until we have seen the underlying beauty. Only then can we even begin to do something to call out all the beauty that is there. Listen to other people, and whenever you discern something which sounds true, which is a revelation of harmony and beauty, emphasize it and help it to flower. Strengthen it and encourage it to live.

John McGrail

Ignatius suggests that we should always think of the risen Christ as a consoler. He consoles the people that we would console in our life. When somebody consoles someone, if they are really sincere, if that person has a serious illness, cancer for example, they do not tell him that he does not have it. They support him. They share with him and they tell him they will help him through this difficult problem. And when Christ consoles us he does the same thing too. He shares with us. He does not tell us he is going to take away the pain or the suffering. He is going to support us and he is going to help us through it.

Sometimes people will falsely speak of religion and tell us, "Just pray you will get rid of the problem." But I think that when we are honest we tell people, "Just pray and God will help you with your problem." This is a totally different thing. Many times he does not take the problem away. He may show us various ways in which we can handle it, how we can go about it and overcome it, and how through the midst of it we can achieve peace and a great deal of satisfaction, but God does not take those things away, as God did not take them away from his Son either.

Richard Rohr

We must listen to what is supporting us. We must listen to what is encouraging us. We must listen to what is urging us. We must listen to what is alive in us.