

# Grounding Principles for Conversations in Communion

In a 2021 webinar hosted by Catholic Mobilizing Network, presenters reflected on five key lessons from the restorative practice of circle process that align with the aims of the Synod on Synodality. These are the foundational principles that shape meaningful conversations in communion.<sup>1</sup>

## **Creating a Strong Enough Container**

For many, a synodal conversation is unfamiliar territory. Recognizing this inherent vulnerability, it is important to communicate structure and co create expectations that hold the group accountable to honoring one another's dignity while together.

## **Listening Well and Sharing from the Heart**

When we listen deeply, we begin to recognize what's moving below the surface — the underlying wounds, needs, and values that ignite compassion and solidarity. Sharing stories from personal experience, rather than credentials, opinions, or positions, has a way of moving us beyond our personal platforms and into the depths of our humanity and mutual belonging.

## **Equalizing Power and Voice**

Following a speaking order ensures that every participant is afforded equal opportunity to speak. This does not erase realities of institutional authority, but it does expand the conversation to include and amplify otherwise unheard voices.

## **Arriving as Our Best and Whole Selves**

Time in prayer, self-reflection, and being attentive to what is happening in our mind, body, spirit, and relationships are vital to the way we participate in the work of the transformative Holy Spirit. We can cultivate these practices before, during, after, and beyond synodal conversations.

## **Putting Relationships before Issues**

Synodal conversations move "from 'I' to 'we' with discipline."<sup>2</sup> This discipline involves building trust and strengthening bonds before attempting to unpack issues or make plans — trusting that the Holy Spirit is at work all along the way.

<sup>1</sup> WEBINAR: Five Lessons from Restorative Practices for the Synod on Synodality  
<https://catholicmobilizing.org/resource/webinar-five-lessons-from-restorative-practices-for-the-synod-on-synodality>

<sup>2</sup> Fr. David McCallum, SJ, is the executive director of Discerning Leadership and facilitator at the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod