



## General Secretariat For the Synod of Bishops



### Some Necessary Conditions for Communal Discernment

**James Grummer, SJ,**  
Department of Spirituality – Gregorian Pontifical University

#### **1. Faith**

- a. Belief that we are standing on holy ground
- b. Belief that God wants to bless this process
- c. Belief that God will speak and act through the group and the process
- d. Belief that the Holy Spirit leads us into communion

#### **2. Freedom (Ignatian Indifference + Disengagement from Preoccupations)**

- a. From sin, disordered affections, whatever idols we worship
  - i. Fear, doubt, preconceived notions, personal limits, hidden agendas, need to persuade others, insistence on tidiness, being the center of the universe
  - ii. Fantasy, incessant doing, repeating mistakes, boundlessness, rigidly bound by rules, chaos without discipline
  - iii. Objectification, instrumentalization, reductionism
- b. For grace: being beloved creatures, generous service, wonder, awe, reverence, imagination, objectivity, balance, openness
  - i. Responding, moving, acting, implementing, engaging, making concrete choices, creating, resting peacefully, being uncomfortable, bold courage
  - ii. Listening to self, others, Holy Spirit: seeking and finding God amidst resistances AND consolations, respecting different people and opinions, seeking the truth beneath the words
  - iii. Speaking personally, honestly, carefully, and even vulnerably

#### **3. Generosity**

- a. Readiness to pray
- b. Readiness to toil without rest, give without counting the cost (mortification)
- c. Readiness to subordinate personal preferences to the good of the group

#### **4. Communion in the group**

- a. Unity of purpose among the participants
- b. Confident trust in one another
- c. Commitment to this concrete process
- d. Commitment, before the process, to embrace the results as the gift of the Spirit

## **5. Time**

- a. Personal and communal prayer
- b. Respectful silence and speech during sharing
- c. Patience as the process unfolds in God's time at God's speed as one step of many
- d. Period of confirmation in lived experience and good fruit after the "conclusion"

## **6. Knowledge needed for engaging in the process**

- a. How to discern spirits
- b. How to converse humbly with one another (how not to give speeches)
  - i. Everyone has a responsibility to speak, even if to pass.
  - ii. No one interrupts while another is speaking.
  - iii. Use I statements when communicating (I think, I feel, I believe...)
  - iv. Listen carefully to what others actually say, (I heard you say...)
  - v. Everyone knows his/her personal position before the communal process and is ready to articulate the reasons for the position
- c. Everyone must have access to all the pertinent information for the discernment
- d. How to formulate a simple statement for discernment
- e. Who makes the final decision and how it is made
- f. How the process itself will unfold and happen