



## SYNODAL U VIDEO REFLECTION GUIDE SR. NIRMALA ARUL

### *Opening Reading - Letter to the Romans 12: 1-5, 9-18*

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned.

For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.

Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good;  
love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor.  
Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.  
Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.  
Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality.  
Bless those who persecute [you], bless and do not curse them.  
Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.  
Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly;  
do not be wise in your own estimation.  
If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.

The Word of the Lord

## Question for Faith Sharing and Reflection – 10 min

*(Participants are invited to reflect individually and then as a large group)*

St. Paul offers advice on how to live the Christian life as disciples in community.


As you heard the reading, what word or phrase caught your attention? Why?

As we consider practices of communal discernment and shared decision-making, how do these words from St. Paul inform, challenge or inspire our way of proceeding?


## Watch video: Sr. Nirmala Arul (4:32) – 5 min




### Video Quotes




“ We journey with the broken, the weak, rejected and marginalized. We take everyone together with us. ”



“ I had to give up my ego, my judgements, my prejudices. ”



“ When we drop our prejudices and preconditions, we start to listen with respect and something new happens. ”



“ We discern all the time. Everyone is given time to talk and listen. We collect information, come back, listen again. ”

## *Pair Group Reflection on Video – 30 min*

*(Participants are invited to discuss the following questions in pairs and then as a large group)*

En el vídeo, la Hna. Nirmala afirma que el discernimiento empieza por escuchar. Afirma: In the video, Sr. Nirmala states that discernment begins with listening. She states “I had to give up my ego, my judgement and my prejudices and learn new skills to listen.”

What beliefs, habits or ideas do you think must be given up and what others taken up in order to listen to others with greater openness? Why?

After discussion, each pair group writes on one color of post-it notes the habits, ideas and beliefs to be given up and on another color the habits, ideas and beliefs to be taken up. Post these on a wall in the room. All are invited to comment on the posted responses, noting any common, conflicting and unique points and how any of the responses might relate back to the reading and/or video. Then move onto the second question.

What are the potential gifts and risks of listening, especially to “broken, weak, rejected and marginalized people”?

In like manner, after discussion each pair group is invited to write down on one color post-it notes the potential gifts of listening and on another color the risks. Post these on another wall in the room. All are invited to comment on the posted responses, noting any common, conflicting and unique points and how any of the responses might relate back to the reading, the video and the first collection of notes.



## Reading from Church Teaching

### *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church 113-114*

Exercising discernment is at the heart of synodal processes and events. That is the way it has always been in the synodal life of the Church. The ecclesiology of communion and the specific spirituality and praxis that follow on from it involve the mission of the entire People of God so that it becomes “necessary today more than ever (...) to be formed in the principles and methods of a way of discernment that is not only personal but also communitarian”

Communal discernment implies carefully and courageously listening to “the groans” of the Spirit which emerge through the explicit or sometimes silent cry that goes up from the People of God: “to listen to God, so that with Him we may hear the cry of His People; to listen to His People until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls us”. A disciple of Christ must be like a preacher, who “has to contemplate the Word, but he also has to contemplate his people”. Discernment must be carried out in a space of prayer, meditation, reflection and study, which we need to hear the voice of the Spirit; by means of sincere, serene and objective dialogue with our brothers and sisters; by paying attention to the real experiences and challenges of every community and every situation; in the exchange of gifts and in the convergence of all energies in view of building up the Body of Christ and proclaiming the Gospel; in the melting-pot of feelings and thoughts that enable us to understand the Lord’s will; by searching to be set free by the Gospel from any obstacle that might weaken our openness to the Spirit.

Saint John Paul II, Address to the Italian Church at the Celebration of its III Ecclesial Convention, 23 November 1995.

Romans 8:26

Pope Francis, [Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops](#), AAS 107 (2015) 1141.

Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 154, AAS 105 (2013) 1084.

## *Reflection on Church Teaching – 10 min*

As future leaders in the church, you will be involved in, responsible for and impacted by many decisions. Synodality calls church leaders to model discernment in decision making through prayer, dialogue and reflection. What skills, practices or experiences do you think would help prepare you to be a discerning leader? What is a step that could you, your fellow seminarians and your formation leaders could undertake to help prepare to participate in and lead communal discernment?

## *Optional Reflection Exercise – 30 min*

*Participants reflect on the following questions individually and write down their thoughts.*

Consider a time when you felt listened to, when you expressed your thoughts, opinions and ideas and you felt that you had been heard. What was that experience like? How did this experience affect you?

Now, consider a time when you expressed your thoughts or opinions and it was not heard or listened to by another or by a group. What was this experience like? How did this experience affect you?

Finally, consider a time when you listened deeply to the ideas and story of another person and were changed or impacted by the experience. What was this experience like? What about you and/or the other person stands out for you as you reflect back on this experience?

After reflecting individually, participants break into pairs and discuss with each other any insights, lessons or graces gained from their experiences of listening.

