

# Communal Heart Wisdom

## A Reflective Process for Communal Transformation

The intention of this *Communal Heart Wisdom* process is to enable small groups, learning partners and communities to engage with the four spiritual capacities of the heart in discernment, decision-making, conflict resolution and interactions. The process identifies how the heart's wisdom can enlighten and inform the issue or experience.



There are two parts to this *Communal Heart Wisdom* process. Part 1 is for individual reflection in preparation for Part 2, which is the communal reflection and process that follows the individual reflection.

The first step in the *Communal Heart Wisdom* is for the group or community to select a *specific issue or experience* that they wish to focus on together, through *the lens of the heart's capacity to listen, see, think and respond*. The next step is to allocate *a suitable time frame for the process*, allowing enough time for people to complete the individual process as outlined below in Part 1.

### Part 1 – Individual Reflective Process:

- ♥ Spirituality of the Heart
- ♥ Awakening the Heart
- ♥ Engaging the Heart
- ♥ Going Deeper

Having allowed time for all participants to complete the individual reflective process of Part 1, the group or community gather at a designated time to do the communal process, which is outlined below in Part 2.

### Part 2 – Communal Reflective Process:

- ♥ Sharing the Heart's Wisdom
- ♥ Exploring the Wisdom of the Communal Heart
- ♥ Responding with Heart: Communal Commitment and Action

**Please note:** Both parts of this process will require time and a reflective prayerful space. This is an invitation for you to replenish your spirit, individually and as a community, just as it was for the disciples, when Jesus invited them to come away from their mission to a quiet place, where they could be alone and rest awhile in His company. (Mk 6:31) Groups or communities may decide to do this process over several days, enabling individuals to do Part 1 in their own time and then meeting up as a group or community for Part 2 on a specified day.

## Part One - Individual Reflective Process

### Spirituality of the Heart

One of the most striking aspects of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd charism, is the centrality of the heart. In our reflections on the call into the deep, Mary Euphrasia's hope and desire that you be of one heart; "a single heart" that warms and unites you all, gives us a poignant insight of the role the heart holds for the Congregation.

*(SME, Conferences, Chapter 68, p.178)*

St John Eudes offers a particular spirituality of the heart.

*"The heart of Jesus has been given to us by the Eternal Father, the Holy Spirit, Mary, and Jesus himself, to be the refuge of our needs, the oracle of our doubts and difficulties, and our treasure. Finally, they have given it to us, not only to be the model and the rule of our life but also our own heart, so that we can, through this great heart, fulfill all our duties with God and with our neighbour."*

*(Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, p.150)*

This hints at the scripture account from Ecclesiasticus /Sirach, of God's blueprint design of our humanity, where we learn that, *God gave us a heart to think with... and placed God's own light in our hearts to see with...*

*(Ecc 17: 1- 8).*

The heart's spiritual capacities, as outlined below, offer an approach to listening, seeing, thinking and responding, which can open in us new ways of being and responding.

- ♥ **Listening with the ear of the heart: "Hearken to God's voice when God speaks to your heart."**

*(St Mary Euphrasia, "Conferences and Instructions", p.106)*

The heart has the capacity to listen and hear beyond one's own stirrings, murmurs, and longings, beyond the deepest silence, into the whispers of the Spirit. This is an intuitive, sacred listening that fosters intimate prayer, genuine discernment, mindfulness and presence.

- ♥ **Seeing with the heart: "It's only with the heart that one can see rightly".**

*(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, "Little Prince")*

When we perceive beyond what the eyes see to what the heart reveals, we see the more, the deeper, the intangible reality. We see what God sees because God puts God's own light in our hearts so that we might see... (Ecc 17: 1-8). This is the essence of true intimacy. Seeing with the heart fosters intuitive perception and new vision, contemplation, and compassion.

- ♥ **Thinking with the heart: God gave us a heart to think with.**

*(Ecc 17: 1-8)*

The heart's thinking can be irrational but it is certain of what it knows. The mind's thinking can be so logical and reasonable yet leaves us without real knowledge and understanding. Only the heart's reasoning can make sense and find meaning in the folly of the cross and all the foolish paradoxical wisdom that comes from it.



Thinking with the heart fosters a profound wisdom, creativity, spiritual resilience, and transcendence.

♥ **Responding with heart: “Daring to engage in the co-creative process with God.”**

Our listening with an open mind and an open heart enables us to sense God working within us personally and collectively. The next step is reaching deep inside to find the spiritual will to act. In choosing to act, we engage as co-creators with our God.

Your Constitutions clearly place this call to engage as co-creators as a response of the heart.

*“Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has called us to live in union with him and continue his redemptive mission... God has consecrated us for this purpose through the gift of God’s love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit”.*

*(Constitutions, Article 2)*

St John Eudes reminds you to respond with your, “great heart”. You have among your own Sisters and Mission Partners, many who are so generous in responding with their great hearts. Perhaps one of the most recent inspirational examples of this for you is Sister Aguchita:

*“I want my apostolic work to consume all the reserves of my hearts and my faculties; I wish to burn away like the candle that illuminates and then diminishes”*

*(Sr. Aguchita Rivas)*

## **Awakening the Heart**

*Take a few minutes to carefully read the following preparatory steps.*

### **One**

**Focus on the agreed group or communal issue or experience.**

### **Two**

As you focus on this issue or experience, find a word or phrase that names for you what you are feeling.

### **Three**

Centre yourself in stillness and in silence ....

- Close your eyes... *(If you wear eyeglasses remove them temporarily for this preparation.)*
- Place the palm of your hand across your forehead or place your fingertips in the centre of your forehead.
- Be aware of whatever you are thinking.
- When you are ready, slide your hand from your forehead, slowly, in a firm but gentle manner, down over your face, your neck and chest to your heart space.

- As you do so, tilt your head down so that as you bow your head you become aware of your heart space.

## Four

As you feel your hand upon your heart, breathe slowly and deeply into your heart space.

- As you do so, whisper to your heart, in rhythm with your breath, a simple mantra that stirs your heart: E.g., “Sacred One, help me to listen, to see, to know...” or “My heart, I open to you...”
- Repeat your mantra until you feel centred in your heart; free of distractions from your mind and ready to begin the process below.

## Engaging the Heart

Write or draw your response to each of the following steps in your own notebook or journal.

***Mindful of the issue or experience you are focusing on...***

### One

Listen with the ear of your heart to whatever is stirring in you about this issue. What feelings, thoughts or questions are surfacing within you?

### Two

Using “God’s light that has been placed in your heart”, (Ecc 17) search your heart to see what God sees... what new insight or new perspective is your heart revealing to you?

### Three

What does your heart think, know, intuit .... What thought, knowing or intuition is your heart revealing?

### Four

Pause and read over what you have written, listening deeply for the wisdom your heart reveals to you. Is your heart ready to respond or address the situation? If yes, how does your heart want to respond?

*If you feel your heart is not ready to respond be patient and gentle with yourself; do not force yourself. Skip step 5 and go to step 6 the segment, “Going Deeper”.*

### Five

Having completed your reflection, you may wish to give some creative expression to this experience through drawing/painting, poetry or dance, or in a simple prayer or ritual.

### Six

Select from this reflective process something that you feel you could comfortably share with your group or community during the communal process in Part 2.

## Going Deeper

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Where you sense there is remaining tension, conflict, or concern, you may wish to take your reflection deeper. Following are four capacities or ways in which we participate, respond, and react in situations and relationships which can empower or hinder our growth and transformation.

These capacities are rooted in the inherent way that Holons function. Holon functioning is the interior instinctive movement through which evolution happens. This occurs through four specific functions or capacities within every Holon, whose interactions result in harmony and wholeness or chaos and dysfunction.

The Four Holon Functions are at work in every person and in every creature at every level of life. The following is in essence how we manifest the four capacities of the Holon Functions.

- ♥ **Honouring one's unique identity and personal integrity**
- ♥ **Adapting, connecting, engaging with others**
- ♥ **Seeking, becoming more, changing, growing, transcending**
- ♥ **Disempowerment, stagnation, refusal to change or to grow**

In our daily activities and interactions, we consciously or unconsciously choose to function, behave and relate out of one or more of these capacities. Recognising where and how we may be struggling in these capacities may enable us to shift or move into new awareness and new directions, and ultimately experience genuine growth and transformation.

## Journal Process

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In light of the issue or concern you have identified in your heart's revelation, reflect on where and how you might be struggling or stuck in any or all of the four capacities by journaling with ***only the statements below in each Holon capacity that are relevant to you.*** Write or draw your response in your own notebook or journal.

### 1. Honouring one's unique identity and personal integrity

I feel unsteady....

I am aware...

I feel strong ...

I am struggling ....

I am holding on....

*Pause here .... what is becoming clear to you*

### 2. Adapting, connecting, engaging with others

I feel connected...

I want to ...

I feel resistance...

I could risk...

I feel stuck...

*Pause here .... what is becoming clear to you*

### **3. Seeking, becoming more, changing, growing, transcending...**

- I feel overwhelmed ...
- I feel ready ....
- I want ...
- I am excited ...
- I am open...
- I feel empowered...

*Pause here .... what is becoming clear to you*

### **4. Disempowerment, stagnation, refusal to change and grow**

- I am afraid...
- I refuse...
- I am determined....
- I feel unable to ....
- I am stuck ...

*Pause here .... what is becoming clear to you*

## ***Drawing the Threads Together***

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- ♥ Read what you wrote, not with a critical mind but with your 'thinking heart.'
- ♥ Sit in the quiet and engage the 'listening ear of your heart'.
- ♥ What is becoming clear to you?
- ♥ What new insights are you gaining?
- ♥ What action do you feel able to take by way of honouring your new insight and awareness?

## ***Blessing the Journey: Prayer and Ritual***

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Having completed your reflection, take time to prayerfully review your insights and the actions you wish to commit to. Having done so, choose one or all of the responses listed below to prayerfully support your commitment.

- ♥ The Word of God I hold onto in this journey is...
- ♥ The inspiration and wisdom I hold onto is....
- ♥ The prayer of my heart is...
- ♥ The Ritual that draws the threads of this journey together is...
- ♥ Select something from this experience that you can comfortably share with your group or community.

## Part Two - Communal Reflective Process

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### Sharing the Heart's Wisdom

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Having gathered prayerfully, people are invited to share their heart's insight or wisdom, in a spirit of contemplative listening and attending, holding all the sharing in silence.

After a time of silent reflection, each member of the group responds to the following starter conversation. It is recommended that these responses be written up in a manner where all can see them.

♥ **What's become clear to me....**

Having completed this starter conversation, the group respond to the following and each response is written up for all to see.

♥ **Our group is....**

Having completed this starter conversation, the group respond to the following and each response is written up for all to see.

♥ **A call I sense among us is....**

Having completed this starter conversation, the group respond to the following and each response is written up for all to see.

♥ **I would love for us to....**

The group responds to this starter conversation and each response is written up for all to see.

### Exploring the Wisdom of the Communal Heart

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The responses to the starter conversations are now explored by way of seeking threads and common ground. The intent here is to make meaning of the communal sharing and determine if a resolution to the issue, concern or crisis has surfaced.

Please remember that not all conversations or processes will yield a full consensus on an approach to resolve an issue. In the spirit of discernment, individuals must ask themselves if there's been enough information and dialogue to know the will of the group, even if it isn't one's own choice. If it is a value conflict, one needs to ask if they can support the group's decision. If no, they need to be honest with the group and the group needs to decide how they will proceed.

## Process

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Explore the following together to ascertain the wisdom of the communal heart.

One

**What would resolution to this issue look like?**

Two

**What trade-offs will it require of us in-order-to find common ground?**

Three

**Where might we experience value conflict which will block us from proceeding?**

Four

**What behavioural change can we embrace as a first step in reducing the conflict?**

## Responding With Heart: Communal Commitment & Action

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After this communal exploration, determine if there is common ground as to how to proceed.

*If yes, take time to articulate and document the common ground.*

*If there is still no resolution, determine if the group is willing to embrace one of the behavioural changes identified above, as a way of compromise and desire to move forward at this time.*

Conclude this communal sharing and process with a suitable ritual and blessing of each other.

This *Communal Heart Wisdom* process is designed to be used for communal discernment, decision-making, conflict resolution and/or difficult interactions. We suggest you use this process regularly, as a support in your communal journey towards reconciliation, healing and radical transformation.