**Holy Listening Exercise**

*“Spiritual direction takes place when two people agree to give their full attention to what God is doing in one (or both) of their lives and seek to respond in faith.”*

The purpose of this exercise is for each participant to practice holy listening in pairs.

As the Speaker

Receive your chance to speak and be heard as an opportunity to explore some aspect of your walk with God during the past week (or day). Remember that you and your friend meet in the company of God, who is the true guiding presence in this time together.

As the Listener

Practice listening with your heart as well as your head. Create a welcoming, accepting space for the other person to explore freely his or her journey in your presence and in the presence of God. Be natural, but be alert to any habits or anxious needs in you to analyze, judge, counsel, “fix,” teach, or share your own experience. Hold space for silence to allow the speaker to pause and allow words to bubble to the surface.

Be inwardly prayerful as you listen, paying attention to the Spirit even as you listen to the holy mystery of the person before you. Try to limit your speech to gentle questions and honest words of encouragement.

When it seems appropriate and unintrusive, invite the other person to explore simple questions such as these:

* Where did you experience God’s grace or presence in the midst of this?
* Do you sense God calling you to take a step forward in faith or love? Is there an invitation here to explore?

How to begin and end the conversation

* Decide who will be the first listener and begin with a moment of silence prayer.
* Converse for eight minutes; then pause for two minutes so that each person may respond to the review questions in silence.
* Trade roles and converse for eight minutes more; then pause again for personal review.
* Use the last five minutes to compare notes on your experiences and your response to the review questions.

**Review Questions**

For the Listener:

1. When were you most aware of God’s presence (in you, in the other person, between you) in the midst of the conversation?
2. What interrupted or diminished the quality of your presence to God or in the other person?
3. What was the greatest challenge of this experience for you?

For the Speaker:

1. What was the gift of the conversation for you?
2. What in the listener’s manner helped or hindered your ability to pay attention to your life experience and God’s presence in it?
3. When were you most aware of God’s presence (in you, in the other person, or between you) in the midst of the conversation?

*Companions in Christ Leader’s Guide* by Upper Room Books

Seeking the Spirit Within – 2021 Winter Retreat – Hope in the Wilderness

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