



Christ and the Rich Young Man, Hofman

Wisdom in Leadership

Small Group Discussions at the Eucharistic Congress

Spirituality in conversation

Can we be spiritual and in union with Jesus Christ in a small group discussion? Or is that possible only in silent contemplation and prayer?

In other words, how does a small group discussion leader bring union with Jesus and a deep spirituality to the table?

A French theologian, Fr. Adolphe Tanquerey, wrote a classic book titled, The Spiritual Life. In his book, he described the three intellectual gifts that bring us into **contemplation**: knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. They work together

to bring us into God's presence and to help us see everything in relation to Him.

*"The gift of **knowledge**...makes us form a sound judgment of creatures in their relation to God; the gift of **understanding**...discloses to us the intimate relations which exist among revealed truths; the gift of **wisdom**...makes us appreciate, prize and relish these truths. ... [T]hey acquaint us with things divine, not through any process of reasoning, but by means of a higher light which makes us grasp them as though we had actual experience of them." (#1339)*

When we are docile to the Holy Spirit, when we place ourselves before Him to hear His voice and to do His will, He will work through us to help others in the same way. As small group leaders, we are not merely directing verbal traffic. We are leading according to the lights given us by the Holy Spirit for the good of souls.

So, according to Tanqueray, the three gifts that we apply in small group discussions also help bring us into the spiritual life. Yes, small group discussions can be deeply spiritual!

Relish is more than a condiment.

Wisdom helps us to see everything in relation to God: creation and all the circumstances of life. It sees our life on earth as the beginning of our life in eternity. It sees truths as an extension of God's divine life: *"The gift of wisdom penetrates the very life of the Trinity."* (Aumann)



But Tanquerey's word, **relish**, also brings us to love. Our life is lived to love God who is always present, always provident. So, wisdom is not merely intellectual experience applied in life, a catalog of learned experiences, of what or what not to do.

St. Paul makes the connection.

Wisdom draws both the intellect and the will—the mind and the heart—together in union with God. St. Paul makes that connection when he wrote to the people in Colossae.

His fellow disciple, Epaphras, related the people's "love in the Spirit". In response, Paul brings together the three gifts described by Tanquerey that "affect contemplation":



*"[We pray] that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all **spiritual wisdom and understanding**, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the **knowledge** of God. (Col 9-10)*

At the discussion table, we deal with both souls and truths. It requires great discernment and prudence to apply the contrasting qualities of gentleness and firmness. At the same time, we encourage people to open up while keeping the conversation rooted in truth.

But how wonderful it is when a beautiful ray of light begins to shine on the conversation. It's a moment to celebrate. We might feel like Paul when he wrote to the Colossians, happy for

the day when they “*heard and understood the grace of God in truth...*” (Col 1:6).

How do we “*understand the grace of God in truth?*”



*Defenders of the Eucharist,
Ruben*

The Holy Spirit leads us into truth gradually. He thrills us with **one** truth, giving us a consolation that penetrates and endures. Then, He shows us how each truth is bound to the others in perfect union. In this seamless garment of truth, He opens us up to who He **is**.

Finally, in grace and truth, He penetrates the deepest center of our hearts and souls to love Him in the truth of His living mysteries:

- The condescension of God becoming man in Jesus’ Incarnation.
- The Holy Trinity’s oneness in three Persons.
- Jesus’ glory in the midst of His suffering and humiliation.
- Divine Love on the Cross in the face of man’s rejection.
- Jesus’ presence in the Holy Eucharist as we look upon the accidents of bread and wine.
- The Holy Spirit prompting us while allowing free will to respond.

The *grace of God in truth* is His love and divine will drawing us into His divine life. Truth is a doctrine. But it’s much more. It is the runway that allows faith to take flight. It explains the mystery as faith and grace give it wings.

Truth is the beauty of God Himself, and it leads us to life with Him. And at the Eucharistic Congress, we focus on a particular truth, a special *conversion*.

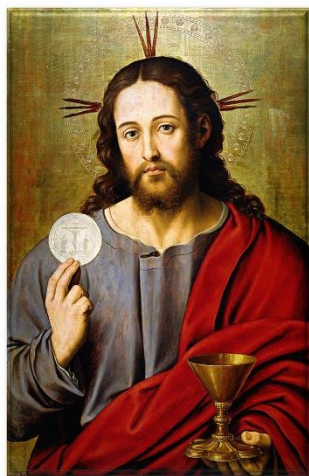
How can we grow in faith and love for Him?

If we remain open to grace and in pursuit of Jesus throughout our lives, we will live in a state-of-conversion as we grow in holiness and union with Him.

At the Congress, we focus on a particular conversion. Pope Benedict XVI wrote about a “*conversion born of the Eucharist*.” Accordingly, this conversion prayer is intended to be prayed together at the Congress, either at the beginning or at the end of the discussions.

Prayer for Eucharistic Conversion

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your presence in the Holy Eucharist where I encounter You in an intimate, true, and loving union. Through the Holy Spirit, pour the graces and merits of Your Sacred Heart—into my own. Make the Eucharistic Congress a moment of conversion, turning me from my self-love to live the divine life with You as a child of God. Help me to truly realize the gift of Your Body and Blood.



The Savior, Juan de Juanes

I pray for all who come to the Congress, that You will set their hearts on fire for love of You in the Holy Eucharist. I pray that the Congress will strengthen our union as one Church—one in the Eucharist, in faith, and in love for You and others. Mary,

our Mother, pray for us, that the Congress will glorify Your Son and help open souls to the encounter they need. Amen.

Discussions that help bring souls into a relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist.

First, it's not about us; it's about the Holy Spirit who precedes anything we do, any response we make to Him. So, we begin with **humility**.

"[T]he Holy Spirit initiates the movement of God in our hearts. ... He awakens within us the desire to encounter God—to talk with Him. ... Therefore, our first step toward Him is always a response to His initial invitation." (Hollcroft)



"Do not be anxious about how or what you are to answer...; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." (Lk 12:11-12)

Second, we pray for the **grace** to do His will:

Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me, to You, O lord, I return it. All is Yours, dispose of it wholly according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace, for this is enough for me. Amen. (Suscipe)

Third, Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is the center of our discussions; they start from Him and return to Him. The Church calls the Eucharist the...

“...source and summit of the Christian life... For in the Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.” (CCC1324).

All mysteries and sacraments are “*bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it.*” What a vast field of discussion! Cast out and reel it back in.

Fourth, we see our discussions as part of God’s providence. We share a spiritual role along with the Confessors, Spiritual Directors, Prayer Intercessors, Workshop Teachers, and Hospitality.

God placed us here to witness to our love for Jesus in the Eucharist through the gifts of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. And so, we must open our own souls to being constantly converted and transformed:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may prove [discern] what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. (Philippians 1:9–10)

Thank you for your desire to serve Jesus Christ, His Church, and souls at the Eucharistic Congress.

Yours in Christ,

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