



COMMUNION

BOOKLET 3 : COOPERATION

About Us



Office for the New Evangelisation

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore

catalyses the baptised faithful to live out the mission to evangelise



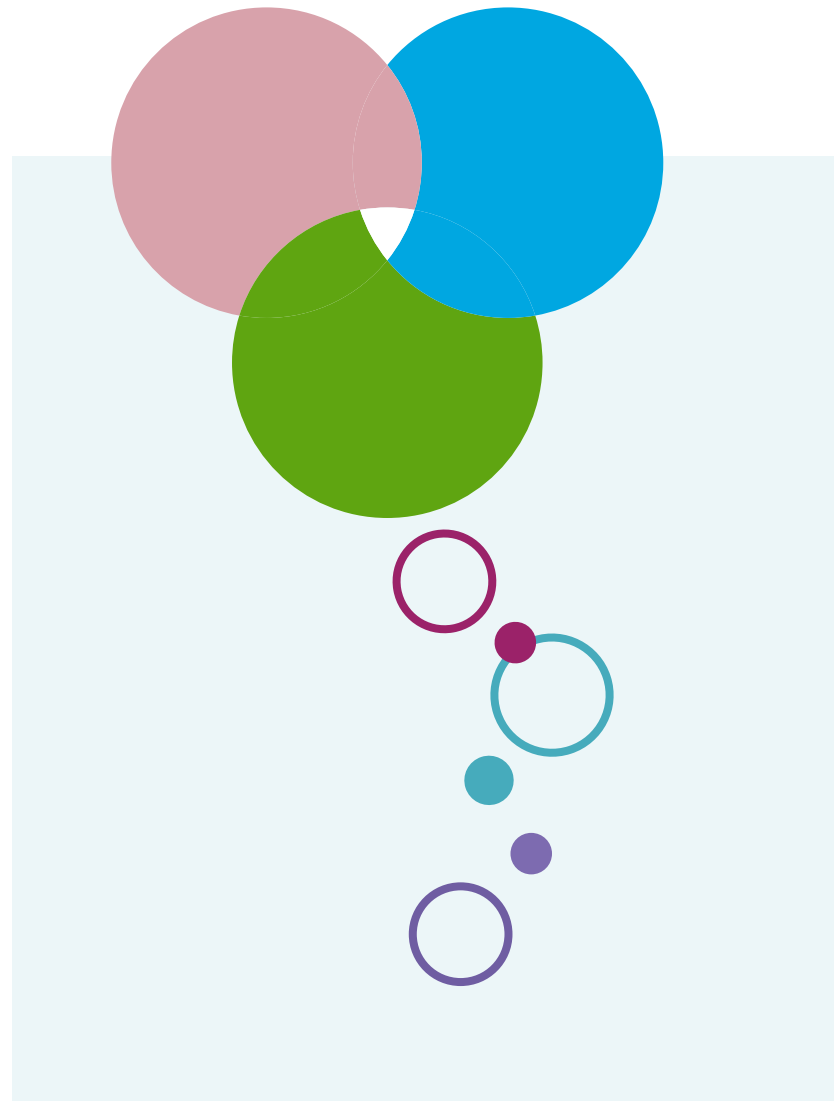
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COMMUNION

Introduction

John 17:21-23

May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so perfected in unity that the world will recognize that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you loved me.

We are familiar with this discourse from John's gospel. However, in reality we often struggle with this 'oneness', this 'togetherness' that John's gospel exhorts because of the complexity of human relationships. The term 'communion' is also understood differently. While there may be a sense of belonging to a community, ministry group or an organization, more often than not, our experience of togetherness is just 'being next to each other'.

The call to be in communion is to know one another at an intimate and unitive level that begins from an intimate togetherness with Jesus Christ. This process of growing and living into communion with Jesus Christ and with each other requires, first of all, for the individual to know who and where he or she is. This knowing enables the cultivation of the habits that will produce communion, the 'togetherness' that Jesus desires us to have - 'May they be one, may they be so completely one' (c.f Jn 17:21)

This process of growing into communion cannot be achieved

at the blink of an eye. It takes the entire community, group or organization to interact and eventually grow to be in true communion. Groups or communities normally move through an awareness of being next to each other, co-existing alongside each other first. After which, they begin to communicate with each other. Communication here means getting to know each other, knowing the values the person subscribes to and what makes the person who he or she is. With greater interaction, relationships are deepened. When members of the community become closer and known to each other, cooperation takes place because of the realization that actions of each individual affect the others and the group. Hence, we cooperate so that more, if not all, members get to reap the positive effects of the action. It is then easier for the community or group to move to eventually collaborating with each other. At this point, we will not be able to say to our members that 'it is not my business' but will make sure that every member is included and cared for.

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Use of this booklet

This is the **third** of four in this series of growing in communion. Each booklet is designed with the aim of Ministries or communities learning and discovering more about the communion continuum so as to be able to grow more intimately with Jesus Christ and with one another. The sessions will not address the individual's growth in relationship with Jesus Christ, as it is assumed that this is done elsewhere.

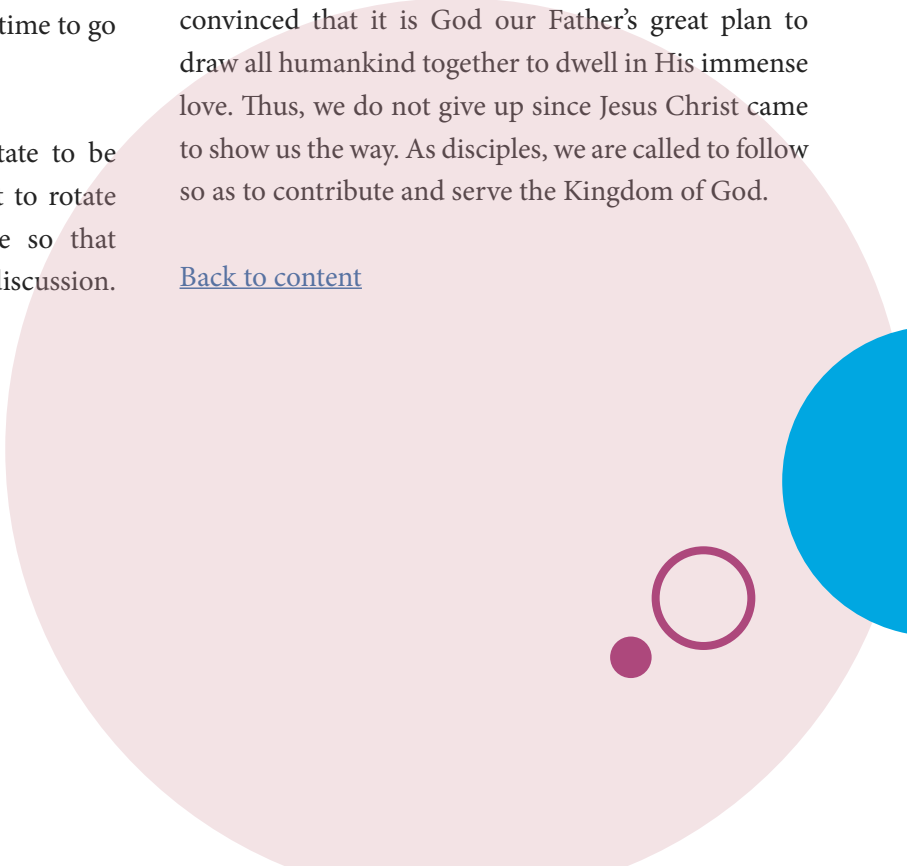
There are three sessions in each booklet and a fictional story of a community before the sessions. Users will follow the growth of this fictional community as they work through the four booklets. It is hoped that through following the life of this fictional community, it may serve as a mirror for users to reflect on their own experience in their community or ministry as they discover and learn more about the stages of communion. So take time to go through the story.

Appoint a person who knows how to facilitate to be the facilitator for the sessions. You may want to rotate amongst those who know how to facilitate so that members have a chance to facilitate the group discussion.

At the end of each session, there is an activity for the group to do. It is essential to give time to all members to complete the activity before moving on to the next session. Members will share their experience at the next session. Begin and end each session with an opening and a closing prayer.

Since growing in communion is a process or a journey for us to grow into, we will find ourselves doing better at some point and at other times not so well. It is not the intention to move ministries or communities to communion overnight just by using these booklets. Rather, it is about raising an awareness that all ministries or communities are called to grow into communion with God and with one another. The important thing to note is that we need to be convinced that it is God our Father's great plan to draw all humankind together to dwell in His immense love. Thus, we do not give up since Jesus Christ came to show us the way. As disciples, we are called to follow so as to contribute and serve the Kingdom of God.

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Story

Hospitality Ministry in St George Parish - pt 3

Having worked on how they can communicate better with each other, the members from the Hospitality Ministry of St George have grown closer in their relationship with each other. They are having another meeting, let us listen and see what other areas they can grow further as the group.

Robin: Father Jack has asked us to do this online bible studies, I am having trouble getting on to the website.

Kaitlyn: Uncle Robin, it is really quite easy. Here let me just send you the link, you can get on to the site just by clicking on the link.

Rose: Kaitlyn, that is a very nice thing to do, helping uncle Robin out. Would you like to help us out too? Since you are the youngest and the most computer savvy among us.

Kaitlyn: You don't know how to get to the website too?

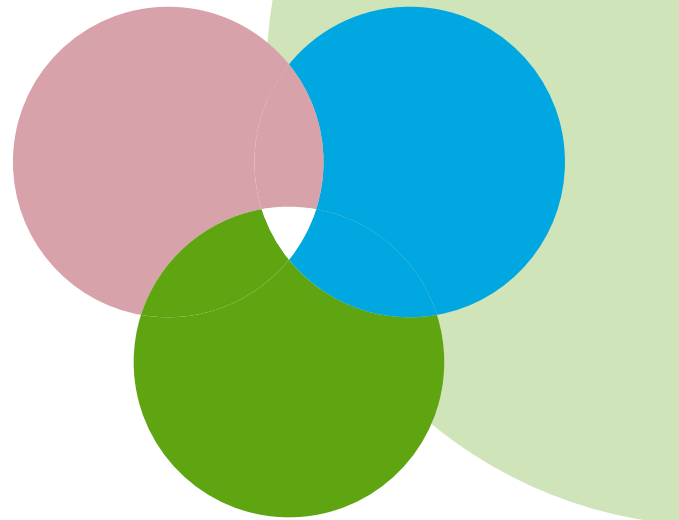
Sally: For me it is more like I am getting lost there. I need to know how to find things on the website.

Kelvin: Er, there is the menu bar on top that you can use to navigate through the website. From there you can access the lessons as well as the resources that the site provides.

Sally: Kelvin, you are speaking 'Greek', I don't know what you are talking about.

Sam: Wait, hang on guys, let's not start a fight over how to use the online bible studies portal okay?

Kelvin: We are not starting a fight, just trying to tell them how to navigate the site.



Rose: Alright everyone, when Father Jack suggested that we do this online bible studies together, he wanted us to grow in our faith knowledge but I think he also wanted to see how we are coming together to help each other. Looking at us, I can see that we all have our different strengths. Why not put these strengths together to help everyone here so that we can learn and grow together?

Robin: Yes, Rose, I agree.

Kelvin: But that means I have to go slower and wait for the rest of you.

Sally: Hey, are you being selfish?

Sam: Look Kelvin, if you look at the session, there is a section on discussion. It does not make sense for you to have a discussion by yourself. I am sure we get to learn from each other.

Kaitlyn: I agree. I can do the session by myself very quickly, but I think I can learn more if I get to hear what you all have to say and teach me. Although sometimes you all spend a lot of time discussing about small things that is really boring, but when you talk about your experience and your stories, I like to listen.

Rose: Thank you Kaitlyn. So, let's come to cooperate so that all of us get to learn and grow.

This is just one example of cooperation, there are certainly many other areas and opportunity to cooperate within a group. How willing is each member in your group to cooperate? Why is there a need for us to cooperate and what are the benefits? It is good to start thinking about these questions as we begin the sessions looking at the way we cooperate.

(You may want to read through this story before each of the following sessions to help members to keep this story in mind)

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SESSION 01

Cooperation

Where does it begin?

session one



Understanding

While the debate is still ongoing whether our human nature is innately cooperative or selfish, as Christians, if we understand what our baptism calls us to, we will be cooperative rather than being selfish. This is because the Trinitarian God of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit that we profess in is about cooperation and communion. This communion comes from a perfect loving relationship of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. At our baptism, we are baptized into the body of Christ, the family of God being drawn into the loving union of the Trinitarian God with Jesus Christ as our head. However, it is unfortunate that many of our baptized Catholics are not aware of this. On top of that, the experience of being drawn into the loving family of God is rather lacking in most people. Society at large is also promoting a very individualistic culture that goes against what we are supposed to be - having a common union as sons and daughters of God our Father.

Despite all the challenges, it is God our Father's deepest desire that the different parts need to work together in order for the whole body to function well. Another image is from the Gospel of John that we are familiar with - the vine and the branches. By our baptism, we are grafted into the vine that is Jesus Christ. As branches we are to bear much fruits and this can only happen when we keep Jesus Christ as our center and we look to each other for help to grow and bear fruit. At this stage, we do not merely exist alongside each

other or merely communicating with each other; we need to realize that God our Father's desire is for all of us to share in His life. Not just as isolated individuals but as a body of diverse persons. This means the fullness of life that God our Father so wants us to have can only be achieved together with others. Whatever one person does will impact others either positively or negatively. The communications that we do prepare us to work with others in our community, God our father gives this cooperation to us so that we may partake in His Kingdom project. .

Reviewing

1 Corinthians 12:18-20,25

As it is, God has put all the separate parts into the body as he chose. If they were all the same part, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one. And so that there may not be disagreements inside the body but each part may be equally concerned for all the others.

Talk about this scripture text, what struck you?

Deciding

Realizing that the fullness of life in God our Father has to be done together with others ought to create in us an attitude of interdependence. We need each other to arrive at our ultimate destination.

“God, who has fatherly concern for everyone, has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood. For having been created in the image of God, who ‘from one man has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth’ (Act 17:26), all men are called to one and the same goal, namely God Himself.” ([Gaudium et Spes](#) #24)

Since we are made to be saved as one people, it does not make sense for us to exist in silo. Moreover, as a people, we have the responsibility to help each other to grow into the fullness of life. We are each other’s keeper because this unity of the human family is where our ultimate meaning and fulfilment lies. Coming together to cooperate for the greater common good is part of Jesus’ commandment to ‘love God and love neighbor’. We are made for communion and hence we cannot deny this inner nature. Our lives become fuller when the inner hunger for communion is experienced in our personal experience of needing and supporting each other.

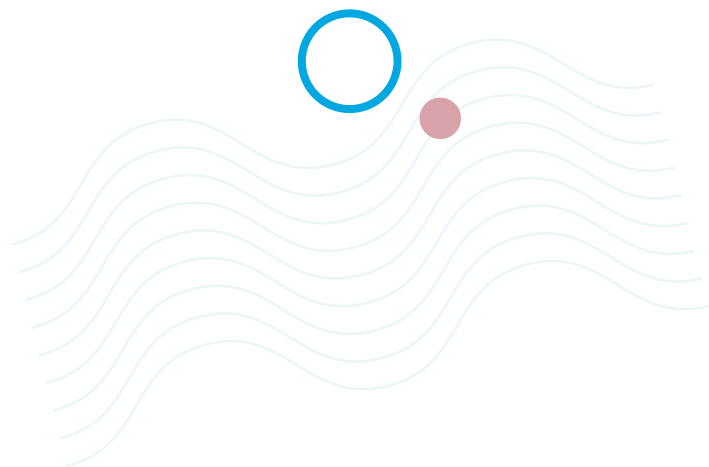
“A characteristic feature of this style of Church is the valuing of the charisms that the Spirit gives according to the vocation and role of each of her members, through a dynamic of co-responsibility. In order to initiate it, conversion of the heart becomes necessary, as well as a readiness for mutual listening, which builds an effective common mind. Motivated by this spirit, we can proceed towards a participatory and co-responsible Church, capable of valuing the wealth of the variety of which it is composed, gratefully receiving the contributions of the lay faithful too, including young people and women, female and male consecrated persons as well as groups, associations and movements. No one should be

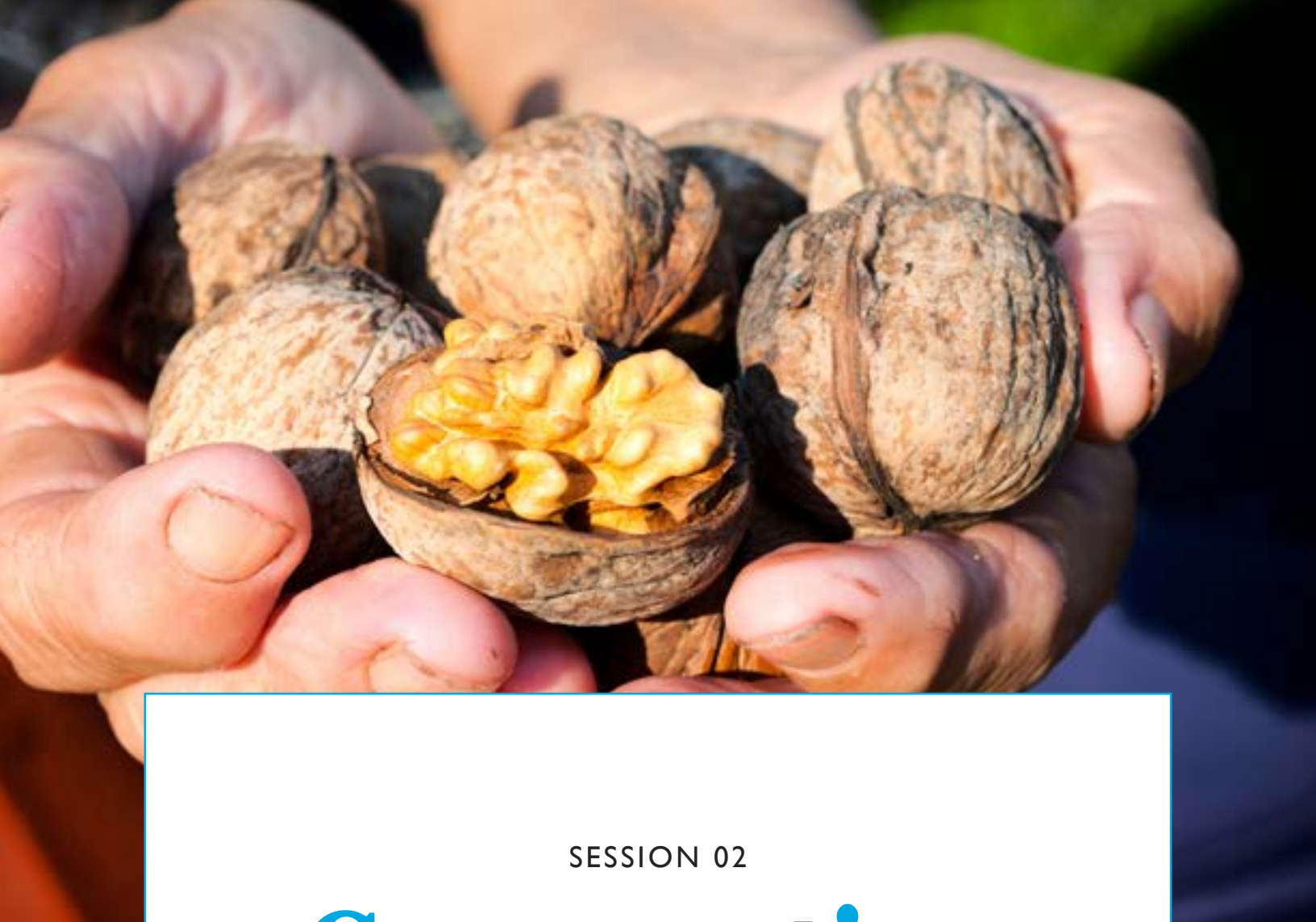
put aside or put themselves aside.” ([Synod on Youth Final Document](#) #123)

Growing

Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 or 4. In the small group, invite each member to name a task or goal that he or she wish to accomplish. E.g. bringing home bound parent to visit Jewel Changi. In the coming weeks, members from the small group help each other to accomplish the task or goal. Give time for these tasks to be completed before the next meeting.

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SESSION 02

Cooperation

Unity by the Holy Spirit,
harmonizes all diversity

session two

Showing Concern

Have a round of sharing how the task/goal of each member is accomplished. How did the members come together to help each other fulfill those tasks? How does each member feel?

Understanding

There is a misconception between unity and uniformity. Sometimes we think that in order for a group to work together, everyone should be the same – same thinking, same behavior, etc. In reality, we know that everyone is gifted differently. When we ‘forced’ others to conform to what we want, there will be unhappiness and disputes. Unity is to recognize the difference in each person, draw out the gifts of each and put the gifts together to serve a greater goal. This work of unity is truly the creative work of the Holy Spirit, who binds and brings all the diverse gifts together. When we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, this Spirit of God will reveal the will of God to draw all creation together, then we will be given new eyes, new hearts to work together for the divine will to be fulfilled in its fullness.

As we learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and each other, it is good to also note the developmental stages that each group will go through as they draw close to each other. The initial stage of forming a group or a community where everyone is just getting to know each other. As members get to know each other better, differences will surface because each has unique characteristics that others may not have. A stage of storming takes place as these differences come to the forefront and members learn to work through them.

This can be a painful stage where misunderstandings and disputes often take place. After a period of storming, the stage of norming sets in where members learn to accept each one as unique and yet belonging to the group. Here is where they work out a way to work together. Once they arrive at the stage of norming, the group will be performing together as a team. Through these stages, it is important to keep faith in the Holy Spirit to bind and give life to the group, harmonizes and unifying the diverse gifts to serve the Kingdom of God.

Reviewing

Philippians 2:1-4

‘So if in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any warmth or sympathy – I appeal to you, make my joy complete by being of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind. Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others.

Talk about this scripture text, what struck you?

Deciding

It is easy to forget or lose focus when we come together in our group. We are either concerned with our differences or we are so happy with each other that we omit the most important person in our group, the Holy Spirit that gives the unity.

“Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who

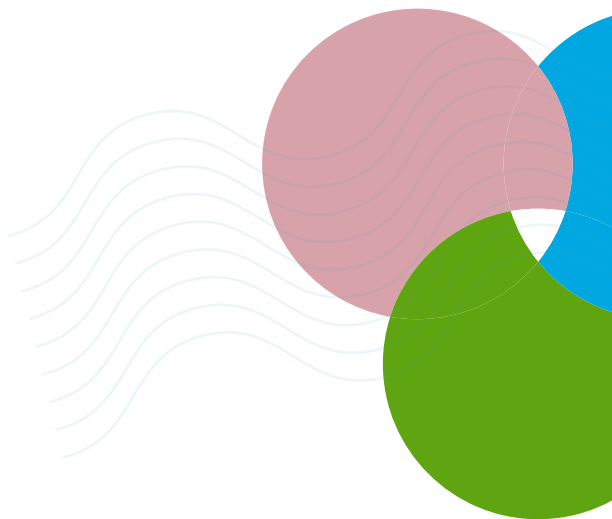
is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things and turn it into an attractive means of evangelization. Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity. When we, for our part, aspire to diversity, we become self-enclosed, exclusive and divisive; similarly, whenever we attempt to create unity on the basis of our human calculations, we end up imposing a monolithic uniformity. This is not helpful for the Church's mission.”
([Evangelii Gaudium](#) #131)

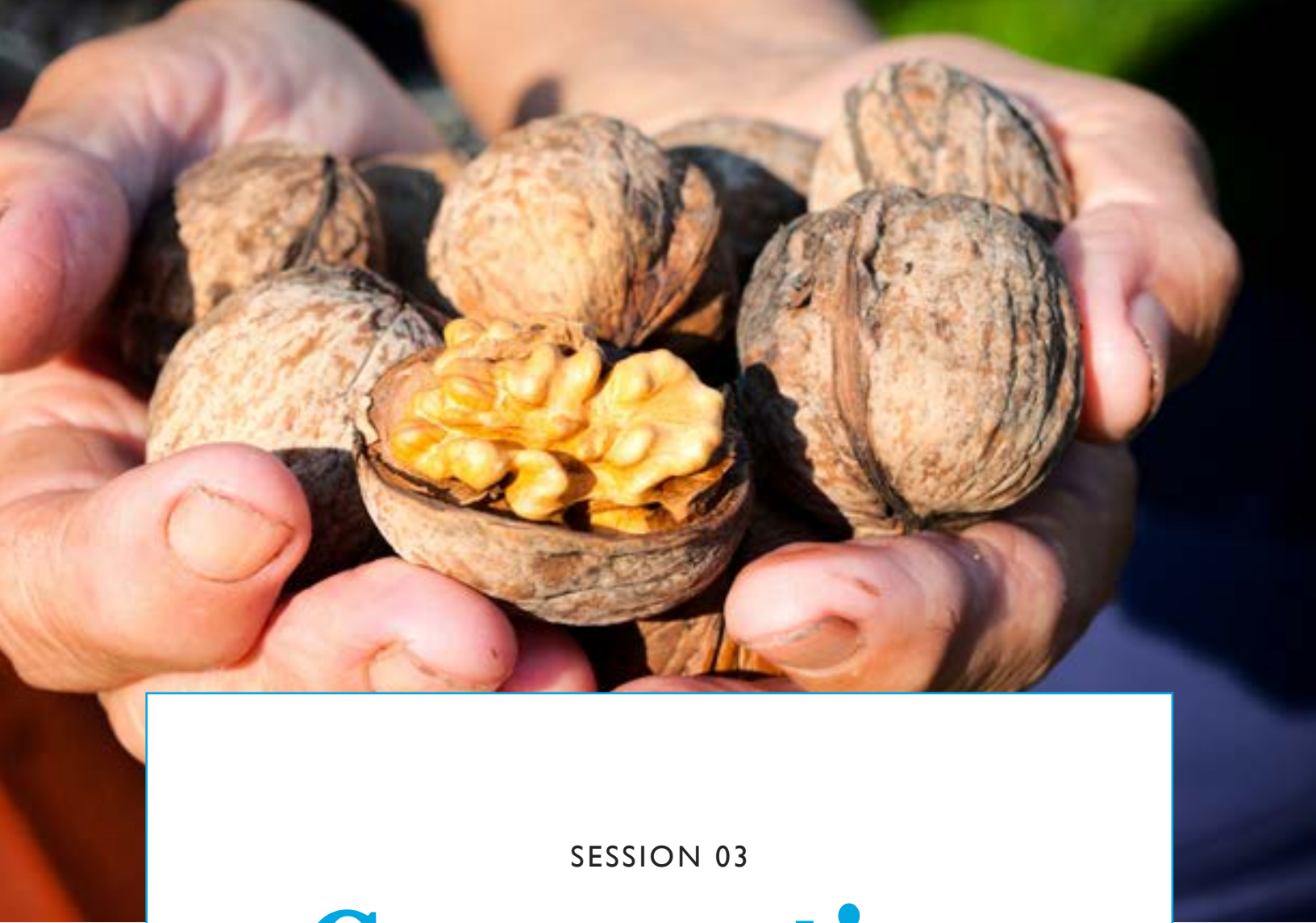
Talk about your experience in your group, how do you cooperate together? Do you ask the Holy Spirit to help and guide your group?

Growing

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis wrote about the ability to pray for someone who is irritating as a way to love and witness the Good News. (c.f. EG#101) In the coming weeks, pray for each member in your group. Give thanks if your group is getting along well together. If your group is walking through some challenging time, give thanks and praise too because this is where all of you can call upon the Holy Spirit to guide and give life to the group. Come together to pray and listen to the inspiration and promptings from the Holy Spirit. Then do whatever the Spirit is prompting to draw all together. When you can see each other face to face and greet each other with God's peace, celebrate that you have grown closer to God our Father and to each other.

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SESSION 03

Cooperation

One end many paths

session three

Showing Concern

At the start of the meeting, have a round of praise and thanksgiving to God our Father for each member of the group. Then share how did the praying for each member go and share how each member feel.

Understanding

When different parties come together to cooperate, they bring with them the gift of themselves – strengths, weakness, hopes, etc. By offering to cooperate instead of operating on silos, the different parties look to complement each other's strengths and weakness. In coming together to cooperate, we can achieve much more than what an individual or a particular group can do. Moreover, different gifts and talents are harness and more people feel engaged thereby growing their sense of belonging to the community or the whole group.

As we begin to realise what our baptism is calling us to – a common union with God our Father and being open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who draws all together, our coming together to cooperate has greater meaning. While each person is called to holiness and go about attaining holiness according to each unique state or situation, we are also grafted onto the vine as one body in Christ. As such, we come together to support each other's path to holiness. The end goal is to be with God our Father to dwell eternally in right relationship. When we learn to cooperate with each other in completing our tasks in the ministry or community, we are also growing in holiness together. This coming together to support and help each other to accomplish tasks is the start to greater union desired by God our Father.

Reviewing

1 Thessalonians 5:11-14

So give encouragement to each other, and keep strengthening one another, as you do already. We appeal to you, my brothers, to be considerate to those who work so hard among you as your leaders in the Lord and those who admonish you. Have the greatest respect and affection for them because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. We urge you, brothers, to admonish those who are undisciplined, encourage the apprehensive, support the weak and be patient with everyone.

Talk about the scripture. What struck you?

Deciding

We are all willing to cooperate when we realise that our own goals can be achieved when we work with others. However, as Christians, the cooperation that we do over a project or the daily cooperation to complete tasks are opportunities to be Christ-like. This coming to work alongside each other, helping each other to complete one another's tasks has a greater effect than just getting things done. It is also witnessing to others our relationship with the living God.

'In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and see others in their deepest dignity. This requires acknowledging a principle indispensable to the building of friendship in society: namely, that unity is greater than conflict. Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense, thus becomes a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity. This is not to opt for a kind of syncretism, or for the absorption of one into the other, but rather for a resolution which takes place on a higher

plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides.’
([Evangelii Gaudium](#) #228)

Cooperation also means that it is the start to see beyond our own desire and hopes, working towards acknowledging the contribution of each member.

‘A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as ‘those who are a part of me’. This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also that the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a ‘gift for me’. A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to ‘make room’ for our brothers and sisters, bearing ‘each other’s burdens’ (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy.’
([Novo Millennio Ineunte](#) #43)

Talk about what struck you so far. Talk about the greater purpose of coming together as a community and how this realization is changing you.

Growing

Plan a project together, you may want to visit an old folks’ home or an outreach to the homebound in your neighbourhood. Appoint a leader and work in smaller teams if your group is large. After you have completed the project, do an evaluation together and see how the group has cooperated on the project. Are the gifts and talents from the group fully utilized? What are the attitudes of members while they work together? What was done well? What can be improved upon? Thank everyone for taking part in the project and have a celebration at the end.

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Communion...

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