

Synodal Leadership - Session Four Handout

Session Theme

Paths to Transformation: Overcoming Biases and Assumptions

Preparation:

After the previous session you were asked to read the following document on Spiritual Conversation before Session 4: [The Spiritual Conversation](#) - Vatican Secretariat for the Synod.



Revisit the Prior Session – 15 Minutes

In your breakout groups, have a conversation using the following questions:

1. Were there any ways you introduced the method of spiritual conversations into your ministry or other aspects of your life?
2. Were there any new insights you had from reading the article?

Breakout Group Reflection Question – 12 Minutes

Saint Paul addressed his letter to the congregation at Colossae in response to spreading false teachings in the community. Paul insists that false teachings are “shadows;” Christ is “reality.” Paul talks about vices to “put away” and virtues to “put on” as if they were garments. *If we use the same analogy for synodality, what would we put aside, and what would we put on?*

Breakout in Pairs for Discussion – 15 Minutes

1. Take five minutes of individual, quiet reflection and read the values listed in the presentation. From that list or drawing on any other values that are significant to you, choose three that are most important to you.
2. Tell your partner your three values. Choose at least one and describe why this value is essential to you. (About five minutes per person)

Ladder of Inference

Harvard Professor and organizational psychologist Chris Argyris proposed a model popularized by Peter Senge in [The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization](#) called “The Ladder of Inference.”

It describes the thinking process we go through, usually without realizing it, to get from a fact to a decision or action. Without reflective thought, we leap from facts to action, flawed by our assumptions and biases.

[The Ladder of Inference - Year 10 CS Ambassadors](#) (1:48)



Breakout Group Exercise – 20 Minutes

Individually, take five minutes and jot down some responses to the following questions:

1. When did you make an assumption or hold a bias and later realize it was inaccurate?
2. How can you encourage others to help you question your assumptions?
3. How could you use the Ladder of Inference to help you remain open to other people's perspectives?

In your breakout groups, take 15 minutes to discuss a summary of your answers to the questions above.

Report Outs – 10 Minutes

1. What were a few salient points from each breakout group?
2. What are examples of how it could benefit our ministries if we helped people be more aware of the Ladder of Inference?

Concluding Commitments and Prayer – 15 Minutes

1. What is your key takeaway from today?
2. What commitment do you want to make regarding openness and biases for the next two weeks? (Each person answers in the large group.)
3. Does anyone have a prayer request, perhaps for someone you know who is struggling or celebrating a blessing?

Looking to the Next Session – A Framework for Leading Change: Adaptive Leadership – 5 Minutes

Please read the following 8-page article before Session 5:

[Becoming An Adaptive Leader - Lifelong Faith](#)

We will also discuss your insights on awareness of biases and openness to other perspectives.



Resources:

[Are You Aware of Your Biases?](#) Carmen Acton, Harvard Business Review, February 04, 2022.



[The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization](#), Peter M. Senge, Doubleday, March 21, 2006.



[Knowledge for Action: A Guide to Overcoming Barriers to Organizational Change](#), Chris Argyris, Jossey-Bass, 1993.

