Centering Examen for Synod Conversations

To prepare for prayer and our important conversation tonight/today, please find a comfortable and relaxed position, close your eyes, (feel free to turn off your screen if that will help you enter into a space or posture of prayer) … and use these next few moments to focus on just your breathing… notice your heartbeat, any subtle movements in your body, and allow yourself to simply be in awe of the gift of Life… As thoughts, concerns, or distractions come up during this sacred time, gently acknowledge them, and let them pass. (pause)

Tonight/Today, as we gather to intentionally listen and share, to learn, and to reflect on how we are called, collectively and individually, to be and to build Church, let us take a moment to just be who we are before God… God calls us to show up just as we are, however we are able, and to trust that God will meet us there…. (pause)

Option to play soft music in the background.

Let us pray…”In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit”.

God, we ask that you enter into this important conversation with us tonight/today. Help us to be courageous, open, and vulnerable, so that we are able to take a compassionate and honest look at how we journey together as Church.

● I invite you to tap into your imagination…When you hear the word “Church”, what comes to mind? … How do you ‘recognize’ Church? … What is the truest image, memory, or feeling that you have that defines what Church means to you? (pause)

● Now, think of a joyful or life-giving memory that you’ve had with your Church community. Let yourself come back to this moment and remember the specific circumstances and people who play a role in this experience. Remind yourself why this memory is so important to you…Where is God in this memory? (short pause) Take a moment to offer up a prayer of gratitude for this experience. (pause)

● Do you feel a sense of belonging to your Church community? … Where does this feeling of belonging come from? (short pause) How have you helped others to also find this sense of belonging? (pause)

● Looking back on the experiences that you’ve had with your Church community - what individuals, movements, or voices bring you a sense of hope or inspire you to take action to respond to the needs of society and the world? … Where has Church called you out of your comfort zone? (pause)

● I invite you to lean into the full reality of our Church today. Where have you experienced hurt or disappointment on this journey? …. When have you felt discouraged?… Have you felt distant from God? (pause)

● Is there anything that might be keeping us from seeing the reality of our Church? What might be keeping us from being completely honest? … Where are you struggling to find peace in the Church? (pause)
Allow these thoughts or memories to fade away gently, and ask yourself - how am I feeling? Do I feel more gratitude or resistance? Eagerness or anxiety? Whatever it is – offer those feelings up to God. 

And now I invite you to enter into an honest dialogue with God… speak to God about the challenges we face, individually and collectively, in building God’s beloved community. 

As people of God, and one human family, where do we neglect to accept, empower, and minister to all of our members? Where have we personally failed to live into the truth of our belonging to one another?

Think about a Church that welcomes, empowers, and accompanies all God’s people: 

○ What do you think of? What do you imagine? 
○ Where do you see yourself fitting in to this Church that you imagine?

What are you called to bring to this conversation tonight/today? 

○ What grace might you need to listen with your whole heart?

How might God be calling us to heal as a Church? How can we learn to better walk with one another to build and to be Church differently?”

In your own words, take a moment to ask God to open your heart to the ways that you are being invited to reflect on and respond to the needs of our Church and the global community.

We now close our Examen with a prayer…

God, our Creator, remind us of our mission, and inspire us to bring our gifts of love and service to all Your human family. May we know once again that we are not isolated beings but connected and belonging, in mystery and miracle, to God, to this Church, and to each other.

Amen.

Examen Prepared by Linh Nguyen