



Sisters of St. Joseph  
Northwestern  
Pennsylvania

Pre-Chapter Meetings

Communal  
Discernment

# Pre-chapter Meetings

- ✓ Gatherings in small groups to pray, reflect and identify those areas of life that we wish
- ✓ to have deeper conversations about
- ✓ Sisters, Agreggees, Associates are **ALL** invited to participate
- ✓ First round will occur from February to mid-March



# Pre-chapter Meetings

- ✔ Second round of conversations will occur in May and June
- ✔ Sisters, Agregées, Associates are all invited to participate
- ✔ A large group meeting will occur in September
- ✔ A communications will give further details



# Chapter Dates

## Chapter of Affairs

- ✔ February 10—12, 2023
- ✔ March 10—12, 2023

## Chapter of Election

- ✔ April 14—16, 2023
- ✔ May 5—7, 2023



# Levels of Participation

## **Chapter of Affairs**

- Sisters, agreees, associates

## **Chapter of Election**

- Sisters

Expectation: Attendance at all weekends



# Other Community Meetings

- ✓ KEB meetings
- ✓ Conference retreat – July 2022
- ✓ Other Groups who serve the community
- ✓ Synodality meetings



# COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT

*From "I" to "WE"*



# Communal Discernment

a movement from the I to the WE in service of the greater good of the whole.

“A prophetic call never happens in isolation; it happens within the context of a particular community, a particular culture, a church culture, a societal culture. The honing and conversion in this process must be contextualized within all these cultures.”





# Dimensions of Communal Discernment

It is deeply spiritual and assumes that each person commits to:

*personal prayer and reflection  
to prayerfully consider all issues and decisions.*



# Dimensions of Communal Discernment

- ✔ It assumes a commitment to the integrity of the dialogue; as far as possible, each person speaks her truth directly to the others, not about them outside of the meeting.
- ✔ The underlying question is always, “What is for the greater common good of the whole?” which is often different from personal preferences.



# Dimensions of Communal Discernment

- ✔ All have a voice. There is space and welcome for each person's insights and inspirations in a contemplatively paced process. All have equal voice.
- ✔ It is peaceful, respectful, but not necessarily easy; participants make a commitment "to have the meeting at the meeting."



# Communication

- ✔ Respectful Dialogue: Communal discernment is transparent with equal access to all information provided, so that the best decisions are made together. It unites rather than divides.



# Communication

- ✔ Nonviolent communication enables persons in dialogue to speak honestly about their own feelings and needs rather than what is wrong with others.
- ✔ This can open up new avenues for sharing in a compassionate way even about painful and difficult issues.



# Communication

- ✓ The dialogue format is more concerned about listening than speaking and is committed to contributing to a shared future.



# Sources of Wisdom

In the communal discernment process there are three sources of wisdom:

- ✓ DISCERNMENT
- ✓ NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION
- ✓ CONSENSUS BUILDING



# Steps in the Process

- ✓ The process begins with a question that focuses the discernment
- ✓ This is followed by a period of silent reflection
- ✓ Each member shares her input, with no response from others
- ✓ There is a pause between each member's input to emphasize the "listening" stance of all





# Steps in the Process

- ✓ When each member has spoken, the group begins to identify common threads and ultimately reaches consensus
- ✓ In building consensus, we probe what we heard

*Could you say more about \_\_\_\_\_?*

*I think that issue is not as vital for us now as this one \_\_\_\_\_.*

*I think we may be saying the same thing but using different words.*

*I heard several of us say that this is a critical area to pursue.*



# Guidelines

- ✓ Speak from the heart:  
Your truth,  
your experiences,  
your perspectives
- ✓ Listen from the heart:  
let go of stories that make it hard  
to hear each other



- ✔ Trust that you will know what to say:  
No need to rehearse
- ✔ Say just enough:  
Without feeling rushed, be concise and considerate of the time of others

