

Showing the Way to God

WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE?
A VIDEO SERIES TO LIGHT YOUR PATH
BY THE

Prelection and Practice

Context

One of St. Ignatius Loyola's great spiritual insights, and therefore one of his gifts to our world, was a way of engaging in conversation with another person. For St. Ignatius, the other person is a child of God and a person deserving respect and consideration no matter what opinion the person holds or the history of the relationship with this person.

At the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius lays out the "Presupposition" for the entire retreat and for Spiritual Conversations. In it each person "presupposes" the good in the other and the "goodness" of the statement being made. When one believes the statement is not correct, with love one seeks to correct or work to understand the statement so that "it may be saved" or understood in a correct fashion.

An Ignatian Year heightens our awareness of the life of St. Ignatius and his way of proceeding, so that we may grow closer to one another and come to know God loves us all unconditionally. Practicing Spiritual Conversations is a practical way of growing closer to one another. Each of four UAP video lessons is not only a celebration, but also encourages us to have conversations. As students and teachers at Jesuit schools worldwide, we strive to engage in honest, brave, and fruitful conversations which have the following attributes & indicators.

Practice (Pre-video)

As a prelection to the videos and lessons, pass out the next page to each student in class. Pair students to practice Spiritual Conversations based upon any or all of the four prompts below during class. Allow each student in the pair to be both the "lead" and "listener" during practice prompts. After 2-4 minutes, switch the roles. Each practice prompt could take about 4-8 minutes.

Students should (1) review the attributes, (2) write the prompt, (3) have the Spiritual Conversation as both a lead and a listener, and (4) complete a post Conversation reflection.

Spiritual Conversations Practice Prompts

1. Talk about a specific experience when something happened to you that changed the way that you think or act. Review the specific details of the past 24-28 hours.
2. What elements of the earth, of nature, of natural resources did you encounter or interact with? Or, what role does nature play in your life?
3. Identify a time where you were "shut out of" or "denied" from a place, group, or privilege – you were kept "out" or removed from consideration. Describe the experience and how you felt.
4. Identify a time when you helped a peer from your school. Describe that experience and how you felt.



Practicing Spiritual Conversations: Framework

Attributes for the Lead and Listener

Slow to speak. The lead enters gently into the situation and conversation, by addressing the prompt. During the time, the listener talks less and listens more.

Listening attentively. In lieu of waiting to speak, the listener listens with an ear toward understanding others' views. While listening, the listener is silent and doesn't interrupt. Perhaps the listener attempts to put herself or himself into the lead's shoes? And by doing so, comes to understand.

Seek the truth in what others are saying. Not every situation is one that requires debate. During the situation and conversation, the listener commits to the spirit of a "learner" who is curious and wonders.

Disagree humbly, respectfully and thoughtfully. When you are in a situation or conversation during which there may be disagreement, those involved avoid blame, speculations, assumptions, and generalizations.

Allow the time it needs. Not every situation or conversation is an end. Perhaps the situation or conversation is a start to something larger. The listener seeks opportunities to continue the dialogue and follow-up when necessary.

Post-Conversation Reflection

Lead: As you led the conversation, what did you notice?

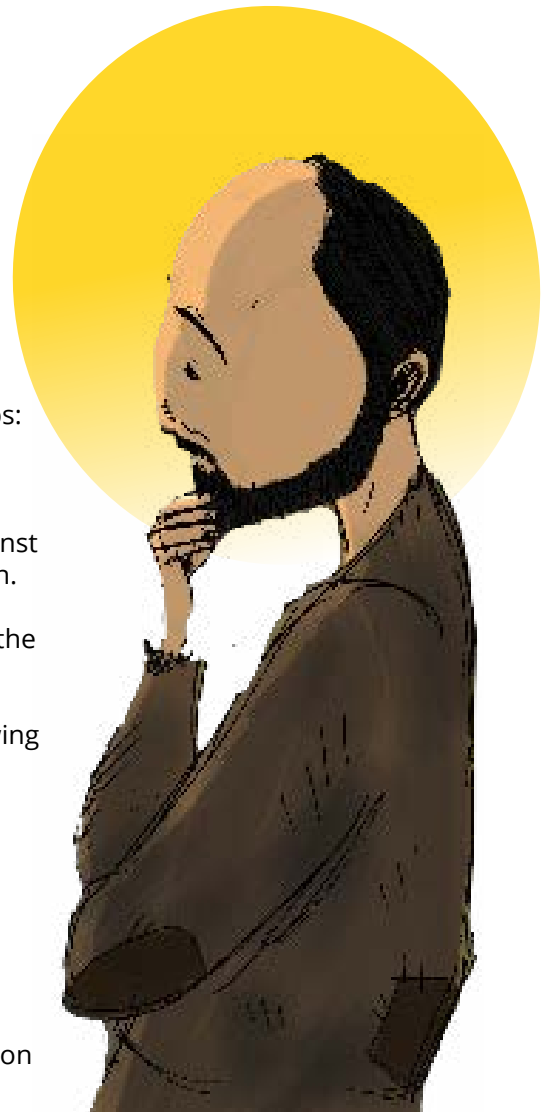
Listener: As you listened to the lead, what did you notice?

Spiritual Conversation Lesson

[Showing the Way to God Video \(linked here\)](#)

After the introduction to the Spiritual Conversation (and practice) and before viewing "Showing the Way to God" video.

- Explain to the students that we have three fundamental relationships: with God; with Others; and with Creation.
- Remind them that Lent is an opportunity for introspection; an opportunity to take stock of our lives; to weigh who we are now against who God wants us to be in relation to God, to Others and to Creation.
- It is an opportunity to reset our values, desires, and goals in light of the Gospel.
- Remind them of the Universal Apostolic Preferences and one, "Showing the Way to God" encourages us to discover our interior life and the presence of God who dwells there.
- The video recounts Ignatius' spiritual pilgrimage and then invites us into a meditation on The First Principle and Foundation. We suggest pausing between the two to allow the students to prepare to enter the meditation.
- After engaging in the meditation, the class enters a spiritual conversation. Pair students for the Spiritual Conversations based upon any or all of the prompts below, during class.



Artwork by Ignasi Flores

- Allow each student in the pair to be both the “lead” and “listener” during each prompt. After 2-4 minutes, switch the roles. Each prompt could take 4-8 minutes.
- Students should (1) review the attributes, (2) have the Spiritual Conversation as both a lead and a listener.
- **Have your students consider, as a Lenten exercise, sharing their insights or experiences of spiritual conversation through an artistic depiction or representative photo of fellowship that may be shared with students across the *Jesuit Global Network of Schools*. Please share your students’ artistic depictions or photos at projects@educatemagis.org**

Spiritual Conversations Prompts

1. Reviewing the Principle and Foundation, what are some ideas, words, reflections, or images that resonated with you?
2. What are the gifts in this world that you have been given by God that help you and others?
3. What are some things in this world that are obstacles to you loving others and God?
4. What would it look like if you were freed from some of the obstacles that you face?

Practicing Spiritual Conversations Full Framework

Slow to speak. . The lead enters gently into the situation and conversation, by addressing the prompt. During the time, the listener talks less and listens more. As you and your partners prepare to engage in meaningful conversation, do a quick self-check:

- Reflect on your position, when entering into a situation or when asked about a conversation prompt.
- Approaching the situation and conversation, assess the context, your attention to presupposition of good, and other people involved.
- Be mindful of the space and surroundings.
- Be mindful of how you are perceived by others – are you open, smiling, joyful? Are you curious? How do you show how you feel?
- Be mindful of your physical appearance – are you sitting, in a physical position that lets others know you are open? Are you in a physical position of openness? Arms and legs not crossed? Leaning into the conversation?
- Be calm and open in your demeanor. What does that look like for you as you approach the situation?
- Think about your best attributes. What do you look like and act like when you are at your best? Carry your best into the situation.
- Have you put aside biases? Baggage? Make a decision to do that.

Listen attentively. In lieu of waiting to speak, the listener listens with an ear toward understanding others' views. While listening, the listener is silent and doesn't interrupt. Perhaps the listener attempts to put herself or himself into the lead's shoes? And by doing so, comes to understand. As you and your partners prepare to engage in meaningful conversation, do a quick self-check:

- How are you preparing to listen? Take a few deep breaths.
- Pay attention to the position of your body. Face the speaker openly.
- Maintain eye contact and look at the speaker during the conversation.
- Put aside distracting thoughts or environmental pieces – this is tough when other things are happening around you. Stay focused.
- Be attentive to the speaker's body language.

Seek the truth in what others are saying. Not every situation is one that requires debate. During the situation and conversation, the listener commits to the spirit of a "learner" who is curious and wonders. As you and your partners engage in meaningful conversation, keep in mind:

- How do I approach the situation as a believer, not a doubter?
- Be active in listening. To do that, as you listen, pretend that is your assignment to report out what the speaker(s) is saying or has said to a larger group.
- Use paraphrasing, clarifying, and summarizing statements, when responding.
 - "You are saying. . ." - paraphrasing
 - "It sounds like you are saying . . ." – paraphrasing
 - "Can you give an example of that?" – clarifying
 - "You just said that such and such is important, can you help me understand what that means to you?" – clarifying
 - "The main ideas are . . ." – summarizing

Disagree humbly, respectfully, and thoughtfully. When you are in a situation or conversation during which there may be disagreement, those involved avoid blame, speculations, assumptions, and generalizations. As you and your partners disagree, practice using the following language:

- "I see what you are saying, and..."
- "I understand where you are coming from, and..."
- "That's a valid point, and..."
- "I respect you, but we disagree..."

Allow the time it needs. Not every situation or conversation is an end. Perhaps the situation or conversation is a start to something larger. The listener seeks opportunities to continue the dialogue and follow-up when necessary. As the conversation comes to a close, consider ways in which it can continue at a future time:

- "Thanks for this conversation. I appreciate you sharing with me. What's next?"
- "As we continue to think about these things, what are some next steps we can take, in terms of action?"
- "This seems to be the start to a larger conversation. Thank you. What's next?"
- "Can we continue this conversation and if so, when can we talk next?"
- "Hey, how did we do here today?"