



School of the Heart Facilitator Guide

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Dear friend in Christ,

Thank you for your desire to bring School of the Heart to your community!

In the midst of the October 2024 XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis released his encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *Dilexit Nos*. My first encounter with the encyclical happened to come when, on the day of its release, I was scrolling through my phone to pass the time while standing in the line to enter the Basilique du Sacré-Cœur—the Basilica of the Sacred Heart—in Paris.

The encyclical begins with three simple words: “He loved us.”

As I walked through the basilica, eyes turned toward its exquisite mosaic ceiling, I was moved to reflect on the effect that the love of Christ has had on saints and people of goodwill throughout the history of Christianity. Christ’s heart—which he does not shield from the sorrows of the world—seemed to exert a magnetic force on the hearts of the saints depicted on the ceiling, pulled into his orbit as though by an invisible tether connecting their hearts to his.



How did their intimacy with Christ’s heart enable their courage and witness in the face of death-dealing institutions and unimaginable suffering?

What difference would it make in a Church journeying toward synodality to root itself first and foremost in the transformational fact that “he loved us”?

What transformation is the Holy Spirit inviting me into through an encounter with Christ's heart?

In a [2025 article](#), Bishop Daniel Flores reflected on *Dilexit Nos*:

“I think the Holy Father desperately does not want us to forget what the source of synodality is, because you're really talking about the source of the life of the church in grace, and the source is the gift given in Christ, to which we must respond...If we lose sight of that, then it simply does devolve into a programmatic sort of thing...We can have all the listening sessions we want, but if we kind of see them as a sociological improvement for communication, then we're missing the point. The point is personal encounter.”

School of the Heart is an offering born of a group of young adults whose hearts have been set ablaze by synodality and by the love of Christ. It aims to give people a place to practice a foundational tool for synodality, “Conversations in the Spirit,” while having transformational encounters with others inspired by the text of Pope Francis's encyclical. It also seeks to weave in engagement with the Final Document of the Synod on Synodality to grow people's familiarity with this document, which serves as a “roadmap” for the Synod's 2025-2028 implementation process.

Apart from an initial session that introduces participants to the Conversations in the Spirit methodology and a closing session that gathers the fruits of synodal conversations, each session will primarily be devoted to a Conversation in the Spirit on a particular chapter of *Dilexit Nos*. While this guide is written for people offering School of the Heart on their own schedules with their communities, it builds upon a virtual offering that will run throughout the Easter season in 2025, during which sessions will feature faith reflections from a combination of young adult leaders and women members of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The agendas for each session included in this guidebook assume that you will show recordings of these faith reflections during your planned gatherings. Recordings will be added to [this Google Drive folder](#) as they become available. The agendas also include a very basic framework for a script for each session, but you are encouraged to adapt as desired!

As a facilitator, you are encouraged to set aside 1-2 hours to watch part or all of the small group [Facilitator Training offered by the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations \(WUCWO\) in 2024](#). It's an excellent overview of the role of facilitators in Conversations in the Spirit. The primary training begins around 14:00 and concludes around 42:00; watch the remainder of the video to view a fishbowl Conversation in the Spirit.

Throughout the process, you are welcome to be in touch with me directly with any questions you have. Thank you for your accompaniment on the synodal journey.

Adelante—

Anna Robertson

Director of Distributed Organizing, Discerning Deacons

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Session Guides for Facilitators

Please use the following session guides as a reference in preparing your School of the Heart sessions. Please feel free to get creative and adapt each guide as you deem most appropriate for your community. For example, where instructional videos from the virtual sessions are included in Sessions 1 and 7, if you prefer to use the videos as a guide to preparing a presentation of your own, you are free to do so.

Session Guides

- [Session 1: Introduction and Orientation](#)
- [Session 2: The Importance of the Heart](#)
- [Session 3: Actions and Words of Love](#)
- [Session 4: This is the Heart that Has Loved So Greatly](#)
- [Session 5: A Love That Gives Itself as Drink](#)
- [Session 6: Love for Love](#)
- [Session 7: Gathering the Fruits](#)

The corresponding participant preparatory information for sessions 2-6 can be found in the [Participant Packet](#).

School of the Heart

Session 1: Introduction and Orientation

Quick Reference

Key Information	Details
Duration	90 minutes
Preparation	Review Dilexit Nos introduction, prepare videos, set up small groups Consider watching WUCWO's Conversations in the Spirit facilitation training (~14:00-42:00)
Goal	Introduce program, experience CIS, build community
Materials	Video access, handouts, name tags (if in-person), slide deck (if using)
Next Week	Participants should read Chapter 1: "The Importance of the Heart"

Session Preparation

Before Participants Arrive

- Set up room/virtual space
- Test video playback and set up [slide show](#), if using
- Organize small group assignments (6-8 people per group)
- Have participant packets ready to share (as hard copies or digitally)
- Review opening/closing prayers

Materials for Participants

- [Participant packets \(digital or print\)](#)
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Session Outline (90 minutes)

Time	Component	Description
5 min	Welcome & Opening Prayer	Set a prayerful tone
5 min	Orientation to School of the Heart	Explain program structure and goals
7 min	Background on the Synod	Video on synodality and implementation
5 min	Reflection on the Sacred Heart	Introduction to Dilexit Nos + Sarah's video
3 min	Quiet Reflection	Silent time with reflection question
7 min	CIS Orientation	Video explaining Conversations in the Spirit
40 min	CIS in Small Groups	Three rounds of sharing
10 min	Large Group Processing	Reflections on the CIS experience
5 min	Announcements & Closing	Next steps and closing prayer



Detailed Session Guide



[Simple Slide Deck \(Optional\)](#)

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Warmly welcome everyone as they arrive	Create a hospitable environment
Introduce yourself briefly	Share your own connection to the program
Begin with prayer	Use video from virtual session OR offer your own

Script: "Welcome to Session 1 of School of the Heart. We're glad you've chosen to join us on this journey exploring Pope Francis's encyclical Dilexit Nos on the Sacred Heart of Jesus and how it connects to our synodal journey as Church. Let's begin with prayer..."

 **Video Option:** Play the opening prayer video shared from the virtual session*

2. Orientation to School of the Heart (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Explain the purpose and structure of the program	Keep this concise - details will unfold naturally
Highlight the connection between Dilexit Nos and synodality	This connection is central to the program


Script: "School of the Heart is a seven-week series that will take us through Pope Francis's recent encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Dilexit Nos. Each week, we'll explore one chapter of the encyclical and connect it to our journey as a synodal Church.

This series was originally developed and offered by young adults associated with Discerning Deacons, so we'll be weaving in their voices throughout, along with faith reflections from women members of the 2023-2024 global synod assembly.

In general our gatherings will follow a simple format: we'll begin with prayer, hear a brief reflection on that week's chapter, and then engage in a practice called 'Conversations in the Spirit' in small groups. This practice was used throughout the Synod on Synodality and is a way of prayerful dialogue that helps us discern the voice of the Holy Spirit together.

Before each session, we ask that you read and pray with the assigned chapter of Dilexit Nos. You can access the full document for free on the Vatican website, or purchase a copy if you prefer.

This week, we'll be following a slightly different format as we get oriented to the synod and to the Conversations in the Spirit method."

 **Video Option:** Option to play the recording of the opening remarks from the virtual session offering background on School of the Heart as a complement to the practical details shared above (note that this may put you beyond the allotted time for this section; please adapt accordingly)*

3. Background on the Synod & Implementation Phase (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
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*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, April 25, 2025.

Briefly gauge group's familiarity with the Synod	Quick show of hands is sufficient
Play video from virtual session*	Video explains key synod concepts

Script: "Let's take a moment to gauge our familiarity with the Synod process. How many of you participated in a local listening session for the Synod on Synodality? How many have heard of or practiced Conversations in the Spirit before?"

[Take a moment to gauge familiarity]

"I want to remind everyone that we're on a learning journey together as a part of the Church's broader learning journey to become more participatory and inclusive (synodal) in its decision making processes. Whether it's our first time participating in a Conversation in the Spirit or whether we were members of the 2023-2024 synod assembly in Rome, I invite each of us to bring a spirit of learning to this series—to treat it as a gym where we are flexing our synodal muscles while having a nourishing and transformational experience."

 **Video:** Play "Background on the Synod & Implementation Phase" featuring young adult leaders from virtual session*

4. Reflection on the Sacred Heart (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Invite someone to read aloud the introduction to Dilexit Nos	If you have a more timid group, feel free to invite someone specific to read
Briefly explain the significance of the Sacred Heart devotion	Keep this simple - more depth in future sessions
Play reflection video	This provides a model for personal reflection

Script: "Let's turn together to the introduction of Dilexit Nos. In future sessions, we'll ask you to read the corresponding chapter of Dilexit Nos ahead of time, but this week we'll read the brief introduction together. Can I have a volunteer to read the paragraph aloud?"


"HE LOVED US", Saint Paul says of Christ (cf. Rom 8:37), in order to make us realize that nothing can ever "separate us" from that love (Rom 8:39). Paul could say this with certainty because Jesus himself had told his disciples, "I have loved you" (Jn 15:9, 12). Even now, the Lord says to us, "I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15). His open heart has gone before us and waits for us, unconditionally, asking only to offer us his love and

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, April 25, 2025.

friendship. For “he loved us first” (cf. 1 Jn 4:10). Because of Jesus, “we have come to know and believe in the love that God has for us” (1 Jn 4:16).

"The encyclical's title, 'Dilexit Nos,' means 'He loved us.' This simple phrase captures the essence of our faith—that at its core, Christianity is about a relationship with Jesus Christ, whose heart burns with love for each of us.

Throughout this series, we'll explore how this love is not abstract but embodied in the heart of Christ—a heart that feels, that suffers, that rejoices, and that continues to pour itself out for us. Each week, we'll hear a reflection from either a Discerning Deacons young adult leader or a Synod Mother. This week we'll hear from a young adult."

 **Video:** Play young adult reflection video*

5. Quiet Reflection (3 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Introduce reflection question	Read slowly and clearly
Allow for silent reflection	Let people know they can journal if they want

Script: "Let's take a few moments of quiet reflection to consider: After having read and prayed with this week's text and the reflection, where did I find myself moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed? What resonated with my life experience, and what diverged from it or offered a new perspective? What happened in my heart as I read, listened, and prayed?"


 **Timing:** Allow 3 full minutes of silence

6. Orientation to Conversations in the Spirit (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Introduce the CIS process	Explain why this practice matters
Play CIS training video*	Video provides detailed instructions

Script: "Now I'd like to introduce you to the practice we'll be using throughout our sessions: Conversations in the Spirit. This is a form of spiritual conversation that was used throughout the Synod process to help groups listen deeply to one another and to what the Holy Spirit might be saying."

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, April 25, 2025.

 **Video:** Play CIS training video from virtual session.* Note that Elise's orientation assumes very short practice groups (10 minutes as opposed to the 40 minutes suggested in the agenda below). If you are following this agenda and allowing for more than 10 minutes of practice, you may want to stop the video before Elise introduces notes on timing for small groups and cover this part of the orientation yourself.

7. Conversations in the Spirit in Small Groups (40 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Divide participants into small groups of 6-8	Consider determining groups in advance and/or encouraging people to join a group with people they don't know
Explain the three rounds clearly	Post the questions visibly if possible
Help groups select facilitator	If some participants have Conversations in the Spirit experience, ask them to volunteer for this in the first session

Script: "Let's break into small groups of 6-8 people. In each group, please select someone to facilitate the conversation and someone to be the timekeeper."

We'll practice the three-round Conversations in the Spirit process:


Round 1 (20 minutes): Each person shares their response to the question without interruption: 'After having read and prayed with this week's text and the reflection, where did I find myself moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed? What resonated with my life experience, and what diverged from it or offered a new perspective? What happened in my heart as I read, listened, and prayed?'

Round 2 (10 minutes): Each person shares how they were moved during the first round of listening: 'What touched me as I listened to others sharing? When did my heart burn within me?'

Round 3 (10 minutes): Engage in free dialogue about what seems to be emerging in your conversation: 'In light of commonalities and divergences among our sharing, how might the Holy Spirit be moving the group? What might the Spirit be saying to us together?'

Remember to listen deeply without interrupting during the first two rounds, and allow for moments of silence between speakers."

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, April 25, 2025.


 **Facilitation Tip:** For Round 1, if there are 8 group members, each person gets ~2.25 minutes with 15 seconds of silence between speakers. For Round 2, each person gets ~1 minute with 15 seconds of silence.

8. Large Group Processing (10 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Reconvene the full group	Give a clear signal for groups to finish
Invite sharing about the CIS experience	Keep focus on the process, not content
Thank everyone for their participation	Affirm courage to try something new

Script: "Let's come back together and reflect on that experience."

- What was it like to share in this way?
- What was it like to listen in this way?
- What did you notice happening in your group during the three rounds?
- What challenges did you encounter?
- What surprised you about the experience?"

 **Facilitation Tip:** Aim to hear from 4-5 different people. If no one volunteers, wait in silence for 10-15 seconds before prompting again.

9. Announcements & Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Share logistics for next session	Direct people to their Participant Packets
Explain rotation of facilitator roles	Encourage everyone to try facilitating
Close with prayer	Use video or personal prayer

Script: "For our next session, please read Chapter One of Dilexit Nos, titled 'The Importance of the Heart.' As you read, pay attention to where you feel moved, challenged, or inspired. Come prepared to share in our Conversation in the Spirit."

Next week, we'll hear a reflection connecting Chapter One to our synodal journey.

Are there any questions before we close?"

[Address questions]

Let us close with St. Gertrude the Great's prayer to the Sacred Heart...

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, fountain of eternal life, Your Heart is a glowing furnace of Love. You are my refuge and my sanctuary. O my adorable and loving Saviour, consume my heart with the burning fire with which Yours is inflamed. Pour down on my soul those graces which flow from Your love. Let my heart be united with Yours. Let my will be conformed to Yours in all things. May Your Will be the rule of all my desires and actions. Amen."

Troubleshooting Guide

Small Group Challenges

Challenge	Suggested Response
Someone dominates the conversation	Gently remind about equal time: "Let's make sure everyone has equal time to share."
Person goes off topic	"Thank you for sharing. Let's return to our reflection question..."
Group is quiet/hesitant	"Let's take a moment of silence to gather our thoughts before we begin."
Technical issues with videos	Have key points prepared to share verbally if videos don't work

CIS Process Challenges

Challenge	Suggested Response
Participants start cross-talking in Rounds 1-2	"In this round, we're practicing deep listening without response."
Time management issues	"We have about X minutes left for this round. Let's make sure everyone gets a chance to share."
Emotional moments arise	"Thank you for your honesty. Let's hold this with reverence." [pause]

Theological disagreements emerge	"Let's note these different perspectives and remember our goal is discernment, not debate."
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Notes for Next Session

After this session, take a few moments to:

- Reflect on what went well and what could be improved
- Plan small group assignments for next week (ideally, keep same groups throughout)
- Send a reminder email with the reading assignment
- Pray for the participants and their journey through this process



Remember: The goal of Session 1 is to create a safe, trusting environment and introduce the basic practices that will support the journey ahead. Perfection is not expected!

School of the Heart

Session 2: Chapter 1 - The Importance of the Heart

Quick Reference

Key Information	Details
Duration	90 minutes
Preparation	Read Chapter 1 of Dilexit Nos, "The Importance of the Heart"
Focus	Understanding our hearts as the integrating center of identity
Materials	Video access, participant packets, slide deck (if using)
Next Week	Participants should read Chapter 2: "Actions and Words of Love"



Session Preparation

Before Participants Arrive

- Set up room/virtual space
- Test video playback and set up [slide show](#) (if using)
- Organize small group assignments (6-8 people per group, ideally consistent throughout)
- Have artwork from Chapter 1 displayed or copies available
- Review opening/closing prayers

Materials for Participants

- [Participant packets \(digital or print\)](#)
-



Session Outline (90 minutes)

Time	Component	Description
5 min	Welcome & Opening Prayer	Set a prayerful tone
7 min	Watch Recorded Reflection	Video or live reflection on Chapter 1
4 min	Instructions for CIS	Brief reminder of the process
60 min	Conversations in the Spirit	Three rounds in small groups
7 min	Large Group Harvest	Brief sharing of insights
5 min	Announcements & Closing Prayer	Next steps and closing



Detailed Session Guide



[Simple Slide Deck \(Optional\)](#)

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Warmly welcome everyone	Acknowledge both returning and new participants
Begin with prayer	Use video from virtual session OR offer your own

Script: "Welcome to Session 2 of School of the Heart. We're continuing our journey through Pope Francis's encyclical Dilexit Nos, focusing today on Chapter 1: 'The Importance of the Heart.' Let's begin with prayer..."



Video Option: Play the opening prayer video from the virtual session (will be emailed after the virtual session) OR offer your own prayer*

2. Faith Reflection (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Play the video reflection*	Ensure good audio/visual quality

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, May 2, 2025.

Invite participants to notice their reactions	Encourage attentiveness to interior movements
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Script: "Let's listen to this reflection, paying attention to how it resonates with our reading of Chapter 1 and noticing our own interior responses."

 **Video:** Play the reflection on Chapter 1 from young adult or Synod member*

3. Instructions for Conversations in the Spirit (4 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Briefly review the CIS process	Keep this concise - just a reminder
Explain how groups will be formed	Same or different from last week?
Identify facilitators	Encourage rotation of roles

Script: "Now we'll move into our Conversations in the Spirit in small groups. As a reminder, this process involves three rounds of sharing:

Round 1: Each person shares where they were moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed by Chapter 1 and today's reflection.

Round 2: Each person shares what touched them during the first round of listening.

Round 3: The group engages in dialogue about what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us together.

Remember to listen deeply without interruption in the first two rounds, and allow for silence between speakers. Today, we'll have more time for our conversations - about 60 minutes total."

5. Conversations in the Spirit in Small Groups (60 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Ensure groups are formed and have space	Groups of 6-8 people are ideal
Make sure each group has a facilitator and timekeeper	Offer assistance if needed

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, May 2, 2025.


Offer support as needed	Be available but don't interrupt
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Small Group Process:

Round 1 (25 minutes): Each person shares their response to the question without interruption: 'After having read and prayed with Chapter 1 of *Dilexit Nos*, where did you find yourself moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed? What resonated with your life experience, and what diverged from it or offered a new perspective? What happened in your heart as you read and prayed?'

Round 2 (20 minutes): Each person shares how they were moved during the first round of listening: 'What touched me as I listened to others sharing? When did my heart burn within me?'


Round 3 (15 minutes): Engage in free dialogue about what seems to be emerging in your conversation: 'In light of commonalities and divergences among our sharing, how might the Holy Spirit be moving the group? What might the Spirit be saying to us together?'

 **Facilitation Tip:** For Round 1, if there are 8 group members, each person gets ~3 minutes with 15 seconds of silence between speakers. For Round 2, each person gets ~1.5 minutes with 15 seconds of silence.

6. Large Group Harvest (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Reconvene the full group	Give a clear signal for groups to finish
Invite brief sharing from each group	Focus on insights, not detailed reporting
Look for common threads	Help connect themes across groups

Script: "Let's gather back together and hear briefly from each group. Could a representative from each group share one insight or theme that emerged in your conversation, particularly in round 3? What might the Spirit be saying to us together about the importance of the heart in our synodal journey?"

 **Facilitation Tip:** Keep each sharing to about 1 minute per group to ensure all groups have a chance to contribute.

7. Announcements & Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Share logistics for next session	Direct people to their Participant Packets
Thank participants and synod reflection leader	Express gratitude for everyone's participation
Close with prayer	Use video or personal prayer

Script: "For our next session, please read Chapter Two of *Dilexit Nos*, titled 'Actions and Words of Love.' As you read, pay attention to where you feel moved, challenged, or inspired. Come prepared to share in our Conversation in the Spirit.

Thank you all for your presence and participation today.

Let us close with St. Gertrude the Great's prayer to the Sacred Heart...

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, fountain of eternal life, Your Heart is a glowing furnace of Love. You are my refuge and my sanctuary. O my adorable and loving Saviour, consume my heart with the burning fire with which Yours is inflamed. Pour down on my soul those graces which flow from Your love. Let my heart be united with Yours. Let my will be conformed to Yours in all things. May Your Will be the rule of all my desires and actions. Amen."

Notes for Next Session

After this session, take a few moments to:

- Reflect on the flow of conversation and any adjustments needed
- Note any themes that emerged across groups
- Send a reminder email with the Chapter 2 reading assignment
- Pray for the participants and their continued journey

School of the Heart

Session 3: Chapter 2 - Actions and Words of Love

Quick Reference

Key Information	Details
Duration	90 minutes
Preparation	Read Chapter 2 of Dilexit Nos, "Actions and Words of Love"
Focus	Understanding Christ's actions and words as expressions of love
Materials	Video access, participant packets, slide deck (if using)
Next Week	Participants should read Chapter 3: "This is the Heart that Has Loved So Greatly"



Session Preparation

Before Participants Arrive

- Set up room/virtual space
- Test video playback and set up [slide show](#) (if using)
- Organize small group assignments (6-8 people per group, ideally consistent throughout)
- Have artwork/imagery related to Chapter 2 available (optional)
- Review opening/closing prayers

Materials for Participants

- [Participant packets \(digital or print\)](#)
-



Session Outline (90 minutes)

Time	Component	Description
5 min	Welcome & Opening Prayer	Set a prayerful tone
7 min	Faith Reflection	Video reflection* on Chapter 2
4 min	Instructions for CIS	Brief reminder of the process
60 min	Conversations in the Spirit	Three rounds in small groups
7 min	Large Group Harvest	Brief sharing of insights
5 min	Announcements & Closing Prayer	Next steps and closing



Detailed Session Guide



[Simple Slide Deck \(Optional\)](#)

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Warmly welcome everyone	Acknowledge both returning and new participants
Begin with prayer	Use video from virtual session OR offer your own

Script: "Welcome to Session 3 of School of the Heart. We're continuing our journey through Pope Francis's encyclical Dilexit Nos, focusing today on Chapter 2: 'Actions and Words of Love.' Let's begin with prayer..."



Video Option: Play the opening prayer video from the virtual session OR offer your own prayer*

2. Faith Reflection (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Play the video reflection*	Ensure good audio/visual quality

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, May 9, 2025.

Invite participants to notice their reactions

Encourage attentiveness to interior movements

Script: "Let's listen to this reflection, paying attention to how it resonates with our reading of Chapter 2 and noticing our own interior responses."

Note: The faith reflection corresponding to this session was offered by Helena Jeppesen-Spulher of Switzerland, a voting delegate to the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops—a "Synod Mother." It was during the opening prayer of the live version of this session that the white smoke was released from the Sistine Chapel's chimney. Helena offered her reflection in the minutes just after the smoke was released, as we awaited the announcement of the new pope. This recording captures a graced moment of liminal space in real time.

 **Video:** Play the reflection on Chapter 2*

3. Instructions for Conversations in the Spirit (4 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Briefly review the CIS process	Keep this concise - just a reminder
Explain how groups will be formed	Same or different from last week?
Identify facilitators and timekeepers	Encourage rotation of roles from previous week

Script: "Now we'll move into our Conversations in the Spirit in small groups. As a reminder, this process involves three rounds of sharing:

Round 1: Each person shares where they were moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed by Chapter 2 and today's reflection.

Round 2: Each person shares what touched them during the first round of listening.

Round 3: The group engages in dialogue about what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us together.

Remember to listen deeply without interruption in the first two rounds, and allow for silence between speakers. We'll have about 60 minutes total for our conversations."

4. Conversations in the Spirit in Small Groups (60 minutes)

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, May 9, 2025.


What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Ensure groups are formed and have space	Groups of 6-8 people are ideal
Make sure each group has a facilitator	Offer assistance if needed
Offer support as needed	Be available but don't interrupt

Small Group Process:

Round 1 (25 minutes): Each person shares their response to the question without interruption: 'After having read and prayed with Chapter 2 of *Dilexit Nos*, where did you find yourself moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed? What resonated with your life experience, and what diverged from it or offered a new perspective? What happened in your heart as you read and prayed?'

Round 2 (15 minutes): Each person shares how they were moved during the first round of listening: 'What touched me as I listened to others sharing? When did my heart burn within me?'

Round 3 (20 minutes): Engage in free dialogue about what seems to be emerging in your conversation: 'In light of commonalities and divergences among our sharing, how might the Holy Spirit be moving the group? What might the Spirit be saying to us together?'

 **Facilitation Tip:** For Round 1, if there are 8 group members, each person gets ~3 minutes with 15 seconds of silence between speakers. For Round 2, each person gets ~1.5 minutes with 15 seconds of silence.

5. Large Group Harvest (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Reconvene the full group	Give a clear signal for groups to finish
Invite brief sharing from each group	Focus on insights, not detailed reporting
Look for common threads	Help connect themes across groups

Script: "Let's gather back together and hear briefly from each group. Could a representative from each group share one insight or theme that emerged in your conversation, particularly in round 3? What might the Spirit be saying to us together about Christ's actions and words of love in relation to our synodal journey?"

💬 **Facilitation Tip:** Keep each sharing to about 1 minute per group to ensure all groups have a chance to contribute.

6. Announcements & Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Share logistics for next session	Direct people to their Participant Packets
Thank participants	Express gratitude for everyone's participation
Close with prayer	Use appropriate prayer connected to chapter themes

Script: "For our next session, please read Chapter Three of *Dilexit Nos*, titled 'This is the Heart that Has Loved So Greatly.' As you read, pay attention to where you feel moved, challenged, or inspired. Come prepared to share in our Conversation in the Spirit.

Thank you all for your presence and participation today.

Let us close with St. Gertrude the Great's prayer to the Sacred Heart...

Lord Jesus, you revealed your love not through abstract words but through concrete actions - your gaze, your touch, your embrace of those on the margins. Help us to recognize how you look at us with love, how you touch our hearts, and how you invite us to the same kind of loving action in our world. As we continue this synodal journey together, may we learn to look with your eyes, touch with your gentleness, and speak with your truth. Open our hearts to receive and to give your transforming love. Amen."

Notes for Next Session

After this session, take a few moments to:

- Reflect on the flow of conversation and any adjustments needed
- Note any themes that emerged across groups
- Send a reminder email with the Chapter 3 reading assignment
- Pray for the participants and their continued journey

School of the Heart

Session 4: Chapter 3 - This is the Heart that Has Loved So Greatly

Quick Reference

Key Information	Details
Duration	90 minutes
Preparation	Read Chapter 3 of Dilexit Nos, "This is the Heart that Has Loved So Greatly"
Focus	Understanding the divine and human love of Christ's heart
Materials	Video access, participant packets, slide deck (if using)
Next Week	Participants should read Chapter 4: "A Love that Gives Itself as Drink"



Session Preparation

Before Participants Arrive

- Set up room/virtual space
- Test video playback and set up [slide show](#) (if using)
- Organize small group assignments (6-8 people per group, ideally consistent throughout)
- Have artwork/imagery related to Chapter 3 available (optional)
- Review opening/closing prayers

Materials for Participants

- [Participant packets \(digital or print\)](#)
-



Session Outline (90 minutes)

Time	Component	Description
5 min	Welcome & Opening Prayer	Set a prayerful tone
7 min	Faith Reflection	Video reflection* on Chapter 3
4 min	Instructions for CIS	Brief reminder of the process
60 min	Conversations in the Spirit	Three rounds in small groups
7 min	Large Group Harvest	Brief sharing of insights
5 min	Announcements & Closing Prayer	Next steps and closing



Detailed Session Guide



[Simple Slide Deck \(Optional\)](#)

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Warmly welcome everyone	Acknowledge both returning and new participants
Begin with prayer	Use video from virtual session OR offer your own

Script: "Welcome to Session 4 of School of the Heart. We're continuing our journey through Pope Francis's encyclical Dilexit Nos, focusing today on Chapter 3: 'This is the Heart that Has Loved So Greatly.' Let's begin with prayer..."



Video Option: Play the opening prayer video from the virtual session OR offer your own prayer*

2. Faith Reflection (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Play the video reflection*	Ensure good audio/visual quality

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, May 16, 2025.

Invite participants to notice their reactions	Encourage attentiveness to interior movements
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Script: "Let's listen to this reflection, paying attention to how it resonates with our reading of Chapter 3 and noticing our own interior responses."

 **Video:** Play the reflection on Chapter 3*

3. Instructions for Conversations in the Spirit (4 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Briefly review the CIS process	Keep this concise - just a reminder
Explain how groups will be formed	Same or different from last week?
Identify facilitators and timekeepers	Encourage rotation of roles from previous week

Script: "Now we'll move into our Conversations in the Spirit in small groups. As a reminder, this process involves three rounds of sharing:

Round 1: Each person shares where they were moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed by Chapter 3 and today's reflection.

Round 2: Each person shares what touched them during the first round of listening.

Round 3: The group engages in dialogue about what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us together.

Remember to listen deeply without interruption in the first two rounds, and allow for silence between speakers. We'll have about 60 minutes total for our conversations."

4. Conversations in the Spirit in Small Groups (60 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Ensure groups are formed and have space	Groups of 6-8 people are ideal
Make sure each group has a facilitator and timekeeper	Offer assistance if needed


Offer support as needed	Be available but don't interrupt
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Small Group Process:

Round 1 (25 minutes): Each person shares their response to the question without interruption: 'After having read and prayed with Chapter 3 of *Dilexit Nos*, where did you find yourself moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed? What resonated with your life experience, and what diverged from it or offered a new perspective? What happened in your heart as you read and prayed?'

Round 2 (15 minutes): Each person shares how they were moved during the first round of listening: 'What touched me as I listened to others sharing? When did my heart burn within me?'


Round 3 (20 minutes): Engage in free dialogue about what seems to be emerging in your conversation: 'In light of commonalities and divergences among our sharing, how might the Holy Spirit be moving the group? What might the Spirit be saying to us together?'

 **Facilitation Tip:** For Round 1, if there are 8 group members, each person gets ~3 minutes with 15 seconds of silence between speakers. For Round 2, each person gets ~1.5 minutes with 15 seconds of silence.

5. Large Group Harvest (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Reconvene the full group	Give a clear signal for groups to finish
Invite brief sharing from each group	Focus on insights, not detailed reporting
Look for common threads	Help connect themes across groups

Script: "Let's gather back together and hear briefly from each group. Could a representative from each group share one insight or theme that emerged in your conversation? What might the Spirit be saying to us together about the divine and human love of Christ's heart in relation to our synodal journey?"

 **Facilitation Tip:** Keep each sharing to about 1 minute per group to ensure all groups have a chance to contribute.

6. Announcements & Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Share logistics for next session	Direct people to their Participant Packets
Thank participants	Express gratitude for everyone's participation
Close with prayer	Use appropriate prayer connected to chapter themes

Script: "For our next session, please read Chapter Four of *Dilexit Nos*, titled 'A Love that Gives Itself as Drink.' As you read, pay attention to where you feel moved, challenged, or inspired. Come prepared to share in our Conversation in the Spirit.

Thank you all for your presence and participation today.

Let us close with St. Gertrude the Great's prayer to the Sacred Heart...

Lord Jesus, you revealed your love not through abstract words but through concrete actions - your gaze, your touch, your embrace of those on the margins. Help us to recognize how you look at us with love, how you touch our hearts, and how you invite us to the same kind of loving action in our world. As we continue this synodal journey together, may we learn to look with your eyes, touch with your gentleness, and speak with your truth. Open our hearts to receive and to give your transforming love. Amen."



Notes for Next Session

After this session, take a few moments to:

- Reflect on the flow of conversation and any adjustments needed
- Note any themes that emerged across groups
- Send a reminder email with the Chapter 4 reading assignment
- Pray for the participants and their continued journey

School of the Heart

Session 5: Chapter 4 - A Love that Gives Itself as Drink

Quick Reference

Key Information	Details
Duration	90 minutes
Preparation	Read Chapter 4 of Dilexit Nos, "A Love that Gives Itself as Drink"
Focus	Understanding Christ's pierced side as source of divine love and mercy
Materials	Video access, participant packets, slide deck (if using)
Next Week	Participants should read Chapter 5: "Love for Love"



Session Preparation

Before Participants Arrive

- Set up room/virtual space
- Test video playback and set up [slide show](#) (if using)
- Organize small group assignments (6-8 people per group, ideally consistent throughout)
- Have artwork/imagery related to Chapter 4 available (optional)
- Review opening/closing prayers

Materials for Participants

- [Participant packets \(digital or print\)](#)



Session Outline (90 minutes)

Time	Component	Description
5 min	Welcome & Opening Prayer	Set a prayerful tone
7 min	Faith Reflection	Video reflection on Chapter 4*
4 min	Instructions for CIS	Brief reminder of the process
60 min	Conversations in the Spirit	Three rounds in small groups
7 min	Large Group Harvest	Brief sharing of insights
5 min	Announcements & Closing Prayer	Next steps and closing



Detailed Session Guide



[Simple Slide Deck \(Optional\)](#)

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Warmly welcome everyone	Acknowledge both returning and new participants
Begin with prayer	Use video from virtual session* OR offer your own

Script: "Welcome to Session 5 of School of the Heart. We're continuing our journey through Pope Francis's encyclical Dilexit Nos, focusing today on Chapter 4: 'A Love that Gives Itself as Drink.' Let's begin with prayer..."



Video Option: Play the opening prayer video from the virtual session OR offer your own prayer*

2. Faith Reflection (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Play the video reflection*	Ensure good audio/visual quality

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, May 23, 2025.

Invite participants to notice their reactions

Encourage attentiveness to interior movements

Script: "Let's listen to this reflection, paying attention to how it resonates with our reading of Chapter 4 and noticing our own interior responses."

 **Video:** Play the reflection on Chapter 4*

3. Instructions for Conversations in the Spirit (4 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Briefly review the CIS process	Keep this concise - just a reminder
Explain how groups will be formed	Same or different from last week?
Identify facilitators	Encourage rotation of roles from previous week

Script: "Now we'll move into our Conversations in the Spirit in small groups. As a reminder, this process involves three rounds of sharing:

Round 1: Each person shares where they were moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed by Chapter 4 and today's reflection.

Round 2: Each person shares what touched them during the first round of listening.

Round 3: The group engages in dialogue about what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us together.

Remember to listen deeply without interruption in the first two rounds, and allow for silence between speakers. We'll have about 60 minutes total for our conversations."

4. Conversations in the Spirit in Small Groups (60 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Ensure groups are formed and have space	Groups of 6-8 people are ideal
Make sure each group has a facilitator and timekeeper	Offer assistance if needed


Offer support as needed	Be available but don't interrupt
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Small Group Process:

Round 1 (25 minutes): Each person shares their response to the question without interruption: 'After having read and prayed with Chapter 4 of *Dilexit Nos*, where did you find yourself moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed? What resonated with your life experience, and what diverged from it or offered a new perspective? What happened in your heart as you read and prayed?'

Round 2 (15 minutes): Each person shares how they were moved during the first round of listening: 'What touched me as I listened to others sharing? When did my heart burn within me?'


Round 3 (20 minutes): Engage in free dialogue about what seems to be emerging in your conversation: 'In light of commonalities and divergences among our sharing, how might the Holy Spirit be moving the group? What might the Spirit be saying to us together?'

 **Facilitation Tip:** For Round 1, if there are 8 group members, each person gets ~3 minutes with 15 seconds of silence between speakers. For Round 2, each person gets ~1.5 minutes with 15 seconds of silence.

5. Large Group Harvest (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Reconvene the full group	Give a clear signal for groups to finish
Invite brief sharing from each group	Focus on insights, not detailed reporting
Look for common threads	Help connect themes across groups

Script: "Let's gather back together and hear briefly from each group. Could a representative from each group share one insight or theme that emerged in your conversation? What might the Spirit be saying to us together about this living water that flows from the heart of Christ in relation to our synodal journey?"

 **Facilitation Tip:** Keep each sharing to about 1 minute per group to ensure all groups have a chance to contribute.

6. Announcements & Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Share logistics for next session	Direct people to their Participant Packets
Thank participants	Express gratitude for everyone's participation
Close with prayer	Use appropriate prayer connected to chapter themes

Script: "For our next session, please read Chapter Five of *Dilexit Nos*, titled 'Love for Love.' As you read, pay attention to where you feel moved, challenged, or inspired. Come prepared to share in our Conversation in the Spirit.

Thank you all for your presence and participation today.

Let us close with St. Gertrude the Great's prayer to the Sacred Heart...

Lord Jesus, you revealed your love not through abstract words but through concrete actions - your gaze, your touch, your embrace of those on the margins. Help us to recognize how you look at us with love, how you touch our hearts, and how you invite us to the same kind of loving action in our world. As we continue this synodal journey together, may we learn to look with your eyes, touch with your gentleness, and speak with your truth. Open our hearts to receive and to give your transforming love. Amen."



Notes for Next Session

After this session, take a few moments to:

- Reflect on the flow of conversation and any adjustments needed
- Note any themes that emerged across groups
- Send a reminder email with the Chapter 5 reading assignment and link to Participant Packet
- Pray for the participants and their continued journey

School of the Heart

Session 6: Chapter 5 - Love for Love

Quick Reference

Key Information	Details
Duration	90 minutes
Preparation	Read Chapter 5 of Dilexit Nos, "Love for Love"
Focus	Understanding our response to Christ's love through love of neighbor
Materials	Video access, participant packets, slide deck (if using)
Next Week	Final Session: Gathering the Fruits



Session Preparation

Before Participants Arrive

- Set up room/virtual space
- Test video playback and set up [slide show](#) (if using)
- Organize small group assignments (6-8 people per group, ideally consistent throughout)
- Have artwork/imagery related to Chapter 5 available (optional)
- Review opening/closing prayers

Materials for Participants

- [Participant packets \(digital or print\)](#)



Session Outline (90 minutes)

Time	Component	Description
5 min	Welcome & Opening Prayer	Set a prayerful tone
7 min	Faith Reflection	Video reflection on Chapter 5*
4 min	Instructions for CIS	Brief reminder of the process
60 min	Conversations in the Spirit	Three rounds in small groups
7 min	Large Group Harvest	Brief sharing of insights
5 min	Announcements & Closing Prayer	Next steps and closing



Detailed Session Guide



[Simple Slide Deck \(Optional\)](#)

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do

Warmly welcome everyone

Begin with prayer

Facilitator Notes

Acknowledge both returning and new participants

Use video from virtual session* OR offer your own

Script: "Welcome to Session 6 of School of the Heart. We're continuing our journey through Pope Francis's encyclical Dilexit Nos, focusing today on Chapter 5: 'Love for Love.' This is our last chapter exploration before our final gathering next week. Let's begin with prayer..."



Video Option: Play the opening prayer video from the virtual session OR offer your own prayer*

2. Faith Reflection (7 minutes)

What to Do

Play the video reflection*

Facilitator Notes

Ensure good audio/visual quality

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, May 23, 2025.

Invite participants to notice their reactions

Encourage attentiveness to interior movements

Script: "Let's listen to this reflection, paying attention to how it resonates with our reading of Chapter 5 and noticing our own interior responses."

 **Video:** Play the reflection on Chapter 5*

3. Instructions for Conversations in the Spirit (4 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Briefly review the CIS process	Keep this concise - just a reminder
Explain how groups will be formed	Same or different from last week?
Identify facilitators and timekeepers	Encourage rotation of roles from previous week

Script: "Now we'll move into our Conversations in the Spirit in small groups. As a reminder, this process involves three rounds of sharing:

Round 1: Each person shares where they were moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed by Chapter 5 and today's reflection.

Round 2: Each person shares what touched them during the first round of listening.

Round 3: The group engages in dialogue about what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us together.

Remember to listen deeply without interruption in the first two rounds, and allow for silence between speakers. We'll have about 60 minutes total for our conversations."

4. Conversations in the Spirit in Small Groups (60 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Ensure groups are formed and have space	Groups of 6-8 people are ideal
Make sure each group has a facilitator and timekeeper	Offer assistance if needed


Circulate among groups to offer support	Be available but don't interrupt
Give time signals at appropriate intervals	For example, at the end of each round

Small Group Process:

Round 1 (25 minutes): Each person shares their response to the question without interruption: 'After having read and prayed with Chapter 5 of *Dilexit Nos*, where did you find yourself moved, inspired, challenged, or disturbed? What resonated with your life experience, and what diverged from it or offered a new perspective? What happened in your heart as you read and prayed?'

Round 2 (15 minutes): Each person shares how they were moved during the first round of listening: 'What touched me as I listened to others sharing? When did my heart burn within me?'


Round 3 (20 minutes): Engage in free dialogue about what seems to be emerging in your conversation: 'In light of commonalities and divergences among our sharing, how might the Holy Spirit be moving the group? What might the Spirit be saying to us together?'

 **Facilitation Tip:** For Round 1, if there are 8 group members, each person gets ~3 minutes with 15 seconds of silence between speakers. For Round 2, each person gets ~1.5 minutes with 15 seconds of silence.

5. Large Group Harvest (7 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Reconvene the full group	Give a clear signal for groups to finish
Invite brief sharing from each group	Focus on insights, not detailed reporting
Look for common threads	Help connect themes across groups

Script: "Let's gather back together and hear briefly from each group. Could a representative from each group share one insight or theme that emerged in your conversation? What might the Spirit be saying to us together about our response of 'love for love' in relation to our synodal journey?"

 **Facilitation Tip:** Keep each sharing to about 1 minute per group to ensure all groups have a chance to contribute.

6. Announcements & Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Share logistics for final session	Be clear about what to expect next week
Thank participants	Express gratitude for everyone's participation
Close with prayer	Use appropriate prayer connected to chapter themes

Script: "Our next session will be our final gathering for School of the Heart. We'll take time to gather the fruits of our journey through Dilexit Nos and reflect on how we might continue to live out its insights in our synodal journey as Church. There's no specific reading assignment for next week, but I encourage you to reflect on your experience of the entire series.

Thank you all for your presence and participation today.

Let us close with St. Gertrude the Great's prayer to the Sacred Heart...

Lord Jesus, you revealed your love not through abstract words but through concrete actions - your gaze, your touch, your embrace of those on the margins. Help us to recognize how you look at us with love, how you touch our hearts, and how you invite us to the same kind of loving action in our world. As we continue this synodal journey together, may we learn to look with your eyes, touch with your gentleness, and speak with your truth. Open our hearts to receive and to give your transforming love. Amen."



Notes for Next Session

After this session, take a few moments to:

- Reflect on the flow of conversation and any adjustments needed
- Note any themes that emerged across groups
- Prepare for the final session's process of gathering fruits
- Send a reminder email about the final session
- Pray for the participants and their continued journey

School of the Heart

Session 7: Gathering the Fruits

Quick Reference

Key Information	Details
Duration	90 minutes
Preparation	Review and bring notes from previous sessions
Focus	Reflecting on the entire journey and discerning fruits and next steps
Materials	Video access, notes from previous sessions, slide deck (if using)
Next Steps	Potential community responses to the journey



Session Preparation

Before Participants Arrive

- Set up room/virtual space
- Test video playback and [set up slide show](#) (if using)
- Organize small group assignments (6-8 people per group, ideally consistent throughout)
- Remind participants to bring their notes from previous sessions
- Review opening/closing prayers

Materials for Participants

- [Participant packets \(digital or print\)](#)
-



Session Outline (90 minutes)

Time	Component	Description
5 min	Welcome & Opening Prayer	Set a prayerful tone
10 min	Introduction to "Gathering the Fruits"	Explain the purpose and process of the final session
5 min	Video: Closing Remarks	Play recording from young adult planning team members
5 min	Instructions for Small Groups	Explain the modified CIS process using previous notes
45 min	Small Group Conversations in the Spirit	Three rounds focused on the journey as a whole
15 min	Large Group Harvest & Next Steps	Broader sharing of insights and possible ways forward
5 min	Closing Prayer & Sending Forth	Final prayer and blessing



Detailed Session Guide



[Simple Slide Deck \(Optional\)](#)

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Warmly welcome everyone	Acknowledge the journey you've shared over the past weeks
Begin with prayer	Use video from virtual session OR offer your own prayer

Script: "Welcome to our final session of School of the Heart. We've journeyed together through Pope Francis's encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, exploring the Sacred Heart of Jesus and its meaning for our synodal path. Today, we gather to reflect on the fruits of this experience and discern where the Spirit might be leading us next. Let's begin with prayer..."



Video Option: Play the opening prayer video from the virtual session OR offer your own prayer*

*Videos referenced in this guide will be uploaded to [this Google Drive folder](#) by Friday, June 5, 2025.

2. Introduction to "Gathering the Fruits" (10 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Explain the purpose of the final session	Connect back to synodal discernment process
Review the journey through the encyclical	Briefly recall each chapter's main theme
Set expectations for the session	Emphasize the importance of this concluding reflection

Script: "Over the past six weeks, we've journeyed through *Dilexit Nos* chapter by chapter, reflecting on its relevance for our journey as a synodal people of God. We began with 'The Importance of the Heart,' understanding how our hearts integrate our whole selves. We explored Christ's 'Actions and Words of Love,' witnessing how he embodied love concretely. We contemplated 'The Heart that Has Loved So Greatly,' recognizing Christ's divine and human love. We considered 'A Love that Gives Itself as Drink,' reflecting on the living water that flows from Christ's pierced side. And finally, we explored 'Love for Love,' examining our response to Christ's selfless love through our own love of neighbor.

Today, we'll gather the fruits of this journey. We'll reflect on our experience as a whole—looking for themes, insights, and movements of the Spirit across our conversations. In our Conversations in the Spirit today, instead of focusing on a new chapter, we'll use our notes and memories from previous sessions as our 'text,' reflecting on how the Holy Spirit has been at work in and among us throughout this entire process.


This approach mirrors the synodal process itself, where after periods of listening and dialogue, communities pause to gather and discern the fruits of their conversation. Today's session is not just an ending but an invitation to consider how what we've discovered might continue to unfold in our lives and community."

3. Video: Closing Remarks (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Introduce the video	Explain who the speakers are
Play the video of young adult planning team	Ensure good audio/visual quality

Allow brief moment for silent reflection after	Give space for the message to sink in
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Script: "Before we move into our small groups, let's hear from members of the young adult planning team who developed School of the Heart. They'll share some concluding thoughts to help contextualize our final conversation."

 **Video:** Play the closing remarks video from young adult planning team members*

4. Instructions for Small Groups (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Explain the modified CIS process	Highlight how today's process differs from previous weeks
Provide clear instructions for using notes	Encourage physical or digital access to previous reflections
Form small groups	Ideally keep the same groups as previous weeks for continuity

Script: "Now we'll move into our Conversations in the Spirit in small groups. Today's process will follow the same three-round structure, but our questions will focus on our entire journey:

Round 1: Each person shares their reflection on the entire journey: 'Looking back at our notes and reflections from the past six sessions, where did I find myself most moved, challenged, or inspired? What themes or insights have stayed with me?'

Round 2: Each person shares how they were moved during the first round of listening: 'What touched me as I listened to others sharing? When did my heart burn within me?'

Round 3: The group engages in dialogue about what seems to be emerging: 'What fruits do we sense the Holy Spirit has been growing in our community through this experience? How, concretely, might we be called to respond going forward?'

Please take a moment to review your notes from previous sessions before we begin. These notes will serve as our 'text' for today's conversation."

5. Small Group Conversations in the Spirit (45 minutes)


What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Ensure groups are formed and have space	Groups of 6-8 people are ideal
Make sure each group has a facilitator and timekeeper	Offer assistance if needed
Give each group a large sheet of paper to record fruits	For sharing in the large group later

Small Group Process:

Round 1 (20 minutes): Each person shares their response to the question without interruption: 'Looking back at our notes and reflections from the past six sessions, where did I find myself most moved, challenged, or inspired? What themes or insights have stayed with me?'

Round 2 (10 minutes): Each person shares how they were moved during the first round of listening: 'What touched me as I listened to others sharing about their journey? Where did I notice commonalities or complementary experiences?'

Round 3 (15 minutes): Engage in free dialogue about what seems to be emerging: 'What fruits do we sense the Holy Spirit has been growing in our community through this experience? How might we be called to respond going forward?'

 **Facilitation Tip:** For Round 3, ask someone in each group to make note of key fruits and potential next steps that emerge.

6. Large Group Harvest & Next Steps (15 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Reconvene the full group	Give a clear signal for groups to finish
Invite sharing of fruits and next steps	Ask each group to share 1-2 key insights
Note common themes	Highlight connections across groups
Discuss potential community responses	Be concrete about how to carry momentum forward

Script: "Let's gather back together and hear from each group about the fruits you've discerned and any possible next steps that emerged in your conversation. Each group will have about 2 minutes to share."

[After all groups have shared]

"Thank you for these rich insights. I'm noticing some common themes across our groups, including [name 2-3 common themes]. As we consider how to carry these fruits forward, let's consider a few concrete possibilities:

1. [Share 1-2 specific next steps appropriate to your context]
2. [Share another concrete opportunity to continue exploring these themes]

I also want to invite each of you to consider a personal commitment in response to your experience. What is one way, however small, that you might continue to integrate what you've learned through School of the Heart?"

💬 **Facilitation Tip:** Consider having someone take notes on the whiteboard or a large sheet of paper to capture key themes and next steps.

7. Closing Prayer & Sending Forth (5 minutes)

What to Do	Facilitator Notes
Invite participants to form a closing circle	If in-person and appropriate for your space
Express gratitude	Thank participants for their commitment and vulnerability
Close with prayer	Use a prayer that connects to both the Sacred Heart and synodality

Script: "As we conclude our School of the Heart journey, I want to express my deep gratitude to each of you for your presence, your vulnerability, and your commitment to this process. Through your openness to the Spirit and to one another, we've created a space where genuine encounter with Christ and with each other has been possible.

The word 'synod' comes from Greek words meaning 'journeying together.' While our formal sessions are ending, our synodal journey continues—transformed by our encounter with the Sacred Heart of Jesus and by the conversations we've shared.

Let us close with St. Gertrude the Great's prayer to the Sacred Heart...

Lord Jesus, you revealed your love not through abstract words but through concrete actions - your gaze, your touch, your embrace of those on the margins. Help us to recognize how you look at us with love, how you touch our hearts, and how you invite us to the same kind of loving action in our world. As we continue this synodal journey together, may we learn to look with your

eyes, touch with your gentleness, and speak with your truth. Open our hearts to receive and to give your transforming love. Amen."



Notes for Follow Up

After this session, take time to:

- Document the fruits and potential next steps that emerged
- Consider how to follow up with participants in the weeks/months ahead
- Share a summary with your pastor or ministry team
- Reflect on your own experience as a facilitator
- Pray for participants as they integrate their experience
- Let us know how your experience was! Please send us a note at info@discerningdeacons.org sharing key insights from your process, along with any feedback you have for us!



Remember: This final session serves as both a conclusion and a beginning—a threshold into whatever the Spirit is inviting your community into next. Trust that the seeds planted during these weeks will continue to grow in ways both seen and unseen.

BULLETIN BLURB

SCHOOL OF THE HEART: EASTER SEASON FAITH SHARING SERIES

Join us this Easter season for "School of the Heart," a seven-week journey exploring Pope Francis' encyclical on the Sacred Heart, *Dilexit Nos*. Hosted by [HOST NAME/GROUP] at [LOCATION], this series offers a chance to deepen your faith through meaningful conversation and reflection.

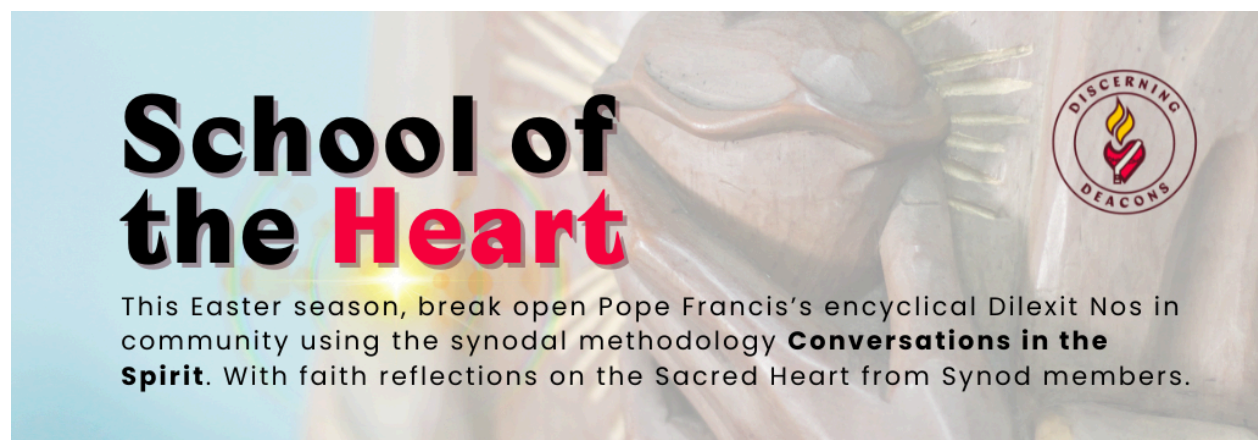
What: Learn and practice "Conversations in the Spirit," a foundational tool of synodal decision making, while reflecting on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The series includes inspiring reflections from members of the global Synod assembly.

When: [DAY OF WEEK], [TIME] from [START DATE] to [END DATE]

Where: [SPECIFIC LOCATION - room, building, address]

Jesus' Sacred Heart offers us a roadmap to living in active hope, even amid fear and suffering. During this Jubilee Year of Hope, come together with fellow members of our community in prayer and transformational encounter.

To register or learn more, contact [HOST CONTACT INFO].



DRAFT EMAIL TO DECISION MAKER

Subject: Request to Host "School of the Heart" Easter Season Faith Series at [Parish/Org Name]

Dear [Pastor/Decision Maker Name],

I hope this email finds you well. My name is [Your Name], and I am a parishioner at [Parish Name]. I am writing to request permission to host a faith formation series called **"School of the Heart"** at our parish during the upcoming Easter season.

This request comes at a particularly significant moment for our Church. On March 15, the Vatican announced that [Pope Francis has extended the Synod on Synodality's implementation phase until 2028](#), with a culminating Ecclesial Assembly planned for that year. Cardinal Grech, Secretary General of the Synod, explained that this extension is designed **"not to add work upon work but to help Churches walk in a synodal style."**

"School of the Heart" is a seven-week program exploring Pope Francis' encyclical on the Sacred Heart, *Dilexit Nos*. The series is sponsored by [Discerning Deacons](#). The program has been developed in collaboration with members of the 2024-2025 global Synod assembly and offers participants an opportunity to:

- Learn and practice **"Conversations in the Spirit,"** the synodal methodology recommended by the Synod
- Reflect on Pope Francis' teachings on the Sacred Heart
- Engage in meaningful faith sharing during the Easter season

I believe this program would benefit our parish community by:

1. Providing a structured opportunity for spiritual growth during the Easter season
2. Offering practical experience with "Conversations in the Spirit," the synodal methodology that Cardinal Grech describes as essential for the implementation phase
3. Connecting our local community to the broader Church's extended synodal journey through 2028
4. Responding directly to the Vatican's call for local churches to "walk in a synodal style" with concrete practices
5. Deepening our understanding of the Sacred Heart devotion during this Jubilee Year of Hope

If approved, I would like to host the series on [Day of Week] at [Time] from [Start Date] to [End Date] in [Proposed Location]. **All materials will be provided**, and I would be responsible for facilitating the gatherings.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this further and answer any questions you might have about the program. I can be reached at [Your Phone Number] or [Your Email Address].

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, [Your Name] [Your Contact Information]

P.S. More information about the "School of the Heart" series can be found at
<https://discerningdeacons.org/event/school-of-the-heart>