

Guidelines for Sharing

1. Be present as fully as possible. Be here with your doubts, fears, and feelings as well as your convictions, joys, and successes, your listening as well as your speaking.
2. What is offered in the sharing is by invitation, not demand. This is not a share or be shunned event. Do whatever your soul calls for, and know you do it with our support.
3. Speak your truth in ways that respect others' truth. Our views of reality may differ, so we ask that there is no interrupting, correcting or debating what others say. Speak from your center. Use "I" Statements. **Furthermore, we should recognize that no single group or viewpoint in the church has a complete monopoly on the truth. Bishops united with the Pope take counsel with one another and with the experience of the whole church, past and present. Yet, we bring the church to engage the realities of contemporary culture, in all of its valid achievements and real dangers.**
4. No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting each other. This is one of the hardest guidelines for those who like to "help". **We should not envision ourselves or any one part of the church a saving remnant. As stated earlier, no single viewpoint has a complete monopoly on the truth.**
5. When the going gets tough, turn to wonder. Turn from reaction and judgement to wonder and compassionate inquiry. Ask yourself, "I wonder why they feel/think this way?" or "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?" Set aside judgement to listen to others -- and yourself -- more deeply. **We should presume that those with whom we differ are acting in good faith. And when considering differing positions, address their strongest points rather than seizing upon the most vulnerable aspects in order to discredit them. Finally, we should be cautious in ascribing motives. We should not impugn another's love of the church and loyalty to it.**
6. Trust and learn from silence. Use silence within the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.
7. Observe deep confidentiality. Safety is built when we can trust that our words and stories will remain with people with whom we choose to share, and not repeated to others without our permission.

(adopted from Parker Palmer's Circle of Trust)