

Discernment in Common

**NOTICING ELEMENTS IN THE PROCESS
OF COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT**

PROCESS INTENSIVE

- **Defining the matter for discernment**
- **Considering the matter for discernment in prayer-reflection**
- **Interpreting the prayer-reflection experience**
- **Engaging in Spiritual Conversation**
- **Interpreting the Spiritual Conversation experience**
- **Arriving at a consensus and decision**



The community is growing faster than it can cope



The environment has changed but the community has not changed accordingly.



Asleep or complacent? In "maintenance mode"?
Pope Francis: Mere administration is not enough. We need to be in active mission (EG)



Moving in different directions



The community is emptying out



Credits to Chris Keng for this slide.



“PRAYER SAVES TIME.”

— Francis Clark, SJ

“However, discernment, in its essence, is not about making decisions or about resolving questions or problems.

It is, fundamentally, a way of being.

It is about seeing how the Spirit is at work in our lives and in our world.

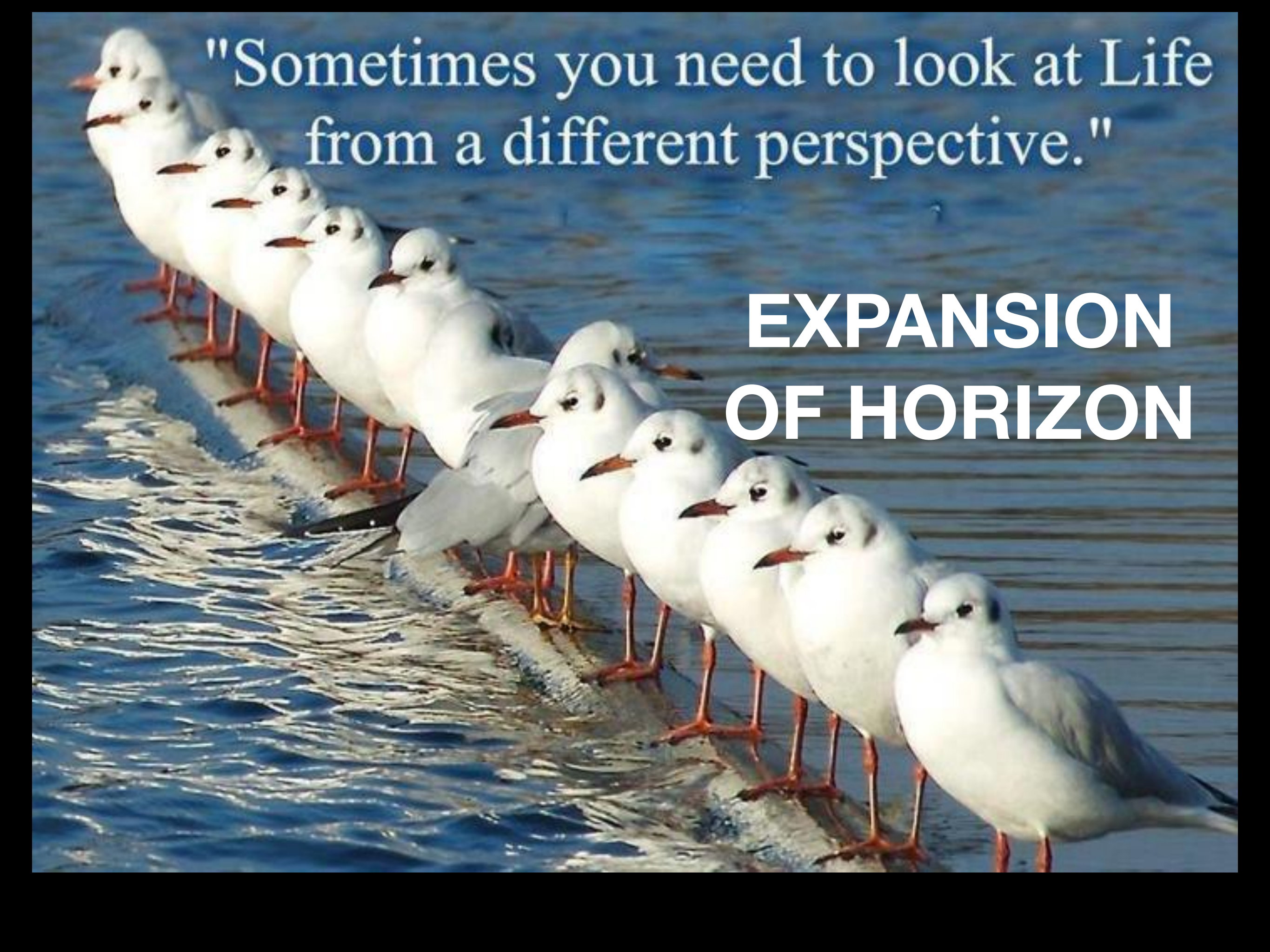
It is about learning how to feel where the Spirit is moving and to learn how to follow that direction.

If we learn to tune in like this then decisions on concrete points will follow more easily..”

PROCESS INTENSIVE



**“In going back and forth
between the self, others, and God,
what effects does the process bring about?”**

A line of white seagulls with orange beaks and legs stands on a narrow strip of land in the ocean. They are all looking towards the horizon. The water is blue and the sky is a pale blue. The seagulls are arranged in a line, with the one in the foreground being the most prominent.

"Sometimes you need to look at Life
from a different perspective."

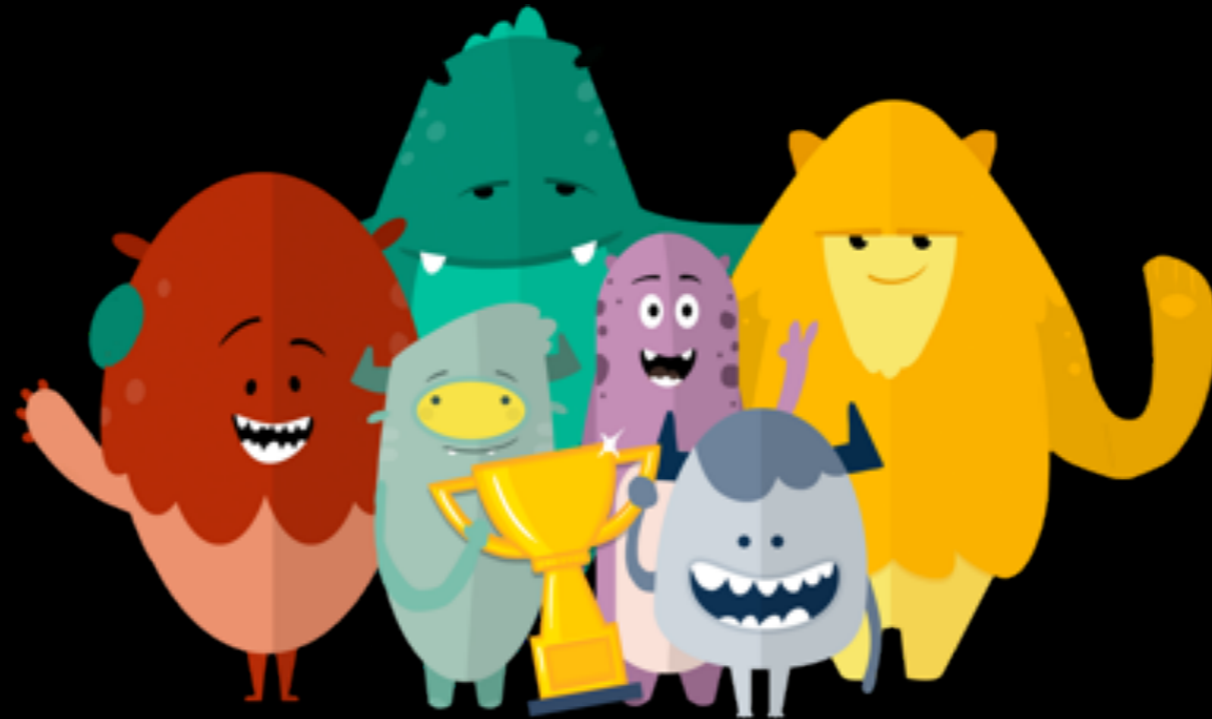
**EXPANSION
OF HORIZON**



FUSION OF HORIZONS

**What are common? different?
in agreement? in opposition?
in harmony? lack of harmony?
resonance? dissonance?
in sync? out of sync?**





DIVERSITY... DISAGREEMENT ... CONFLICT

are not barriers to the process of communal discernment.

They are precisely the means to cultivate

**DIALOGUE ... UNDERSTANDING ... LEARNING ...
MUTUAL RESPECT.**

**The process itself, notwithstanding the outcome,
has the potential to build the community.**



**What are qualities of a good
process of discernment?**



parts and whole

What are qualities of a good process of discernment?

aware

expressed

and

and

unaware

unexpressed



What are qualities of a good process of discernment?



good to better

What are qualities of a good process of discernment?

**Ignatian
indifference**

**greater
loving**



Commitment

**more
life-giving**

CONSENSUS

DECISION

**PRAYER AND
REFLECTION**

**SPIRITUAL
CONVERSATION**

CONSENSUS

DECISION

**PRAYER AND
REFLECTION**

**SPIRITUAL
CONVERSATION**

PREPARATION

“What you do before prayer is as important as praying itself.”

“WHAT WE DO BEFORE DISCERNMENT IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE FORMAL DISCERNMENT ITSELF.”

Preparation

- **Role of the leader:**
- Discern – Is it the right time to have the process? If yes:
- Decide on steps and timeline
- Form a coordinating team to manage the process
 - Ensure that those with assigned roles will have available time to focus on coordinating the process
- Ensure adequate resources
- Communicate about it, clarify expectations, address fears
 - Reasons for embarking on the process
 - Steps, timeline, activities
 - Participation, roles, responsibilities
 - Emphasis on communal spiritual discernment of God's will
- Ensure people are trained for necessary skills in the process

Preparing the group

Credits to ignatianresources.org

WHAT WE NEED TO DO



1. Clarify the question or issue to be discussed.
2. Gather key stakeholders and give them a quick formation on the process.
3. Establish the group objectives and expectations.
4. Clarify who is going to make the final decision, the group or a single person.

“Discernment in common is the prior condition for apostolic planning at all levels of the Society’s organisational structure.”

Fr. A. Sosa, Letter 27
Sep 2017

**DATA GATHERING
IS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT
IN PREPARATION FOR
A GOOD COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT.**



Data gathering

⇒ WHAT WE NEED TO DO



1. Gather relevant information
2. Carry out analysis and reflection
3. Present the information and analysis to group members
4. Spend time in personal prayer

Importance of research Credits to Chris Keng for this slide.



- Research not only produces data for discernment
- More importantly, it makes the community **get out of its box and listen to the world**
 - Expand the minds of members
 - Shift from self-concern to concern for the world's needs
- A good research process will also begin to facilitate attentiveness to the movements of the Spirit, inner freedom, conversion, clarity, and **insight**

RESEARCH

NOT ONLY FOR INFORMATION

BUT FOR FORMATION



OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS OF COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT