



*Becoming a Listening and
Learning Church*

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Conversion

[Conversion requires] a critical and self-critical regard ...
to find the attitudes and mentalities that prevent us from
connecting with ourselves, with others, and with nature.

- The Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris*, “The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for Integral Ecology” (2019), article 225



Threefold Dynamic of Conversion

Unlearning

All that obscures the “bigness” of God

Learning

To listen to the Spirit in all times and place

Relearning

The richness of and future-orientation of the tradition

The Dimensions of Faith

If the Rock you lean on is too miniscule to support the range of your life's desires, faith will collapse as you grow into maturity. For a community like the church, if the God they lean on together is inadequate, they will lead a cramped religious life.

❖ Elizabeth Johnson, *Abounding in Kindness: Writings for the People of God*, 31

Tradition

To stand in a tradition is not to stand still but to stand in the deep, loamy soil that feeds further growth.

- Janet Soskice, “Tradition,” in *Tradition and Modernity: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, ed. David Marshall, 29.

The Paradox of Tradition

Tradition's powers of conservation are equalled by its powers of conquest ... [Through its Tradition], the Church with the help of the past liberates the future from the unconscious limitations and illusions of the present.

- Maurice Blondel, *History and Dogma* (1904)

Listening-1

There are times when [the Church] needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what others have to say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel.

A Church always on the defensive, which loses her humility and stops listening to others, which leaves no room for questions, loses her youth and turns into a museum.

- Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit* (2019), article 41.

Listening-2

When ecclesial practices silence, invisibilize, and demonize some, namely by racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism, they smother the reality of the Holy Spirit that ‘blows where it chooses’ (John 3:8) as Advocate for the outcast.

- Eboni Marshall Turman, “The Holy Spirit and the Black Church Tradition: Womanist Considerations,” in *The Holy Spirit and the Church: Ecumenical Reflections with a Pastoral Perspective*, ed. Thomas Hughson, 107.

Foundations of Hope

Christian hope has its basis in the God who
*“addresses humankind as friends and moves
among them, in order to invite and receive
them into [God’s] own company”*

- Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, “Constitution on Divine Revelation,” art 2

Hope

In the light of Christ, hope involves being able to imagine the limitations of the present as other than absolute ... as no longer the imprisonment one thought it was.

❖ Paul Crowley, *Unwanted Wisdom: Suffering, the Cross, and Hope*, 53

Hope and Naming the Truth

Catholic self-criticism is frank, sometimes even harsh. It does not arise from a lack of confidence or from a lack of love for the church, but, on the contrary, from a deep attachment and a desire to be able to trust.

- Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, 36

Discernment

Discernment is not a matter of applying rules or repeating what was done in the past, since what was useful in one context may not prove so in another. The discernment of spirits liberates us from rigidity, which has no place before the perennial “today” of the risen Lord.

- Pope Francis, *Rejoice and Be Glad*, article 173

Complacency or Boldness?

Complacency is seductive; it tells us that there is no point in trying to change things, that there is nothing we can do.

Let us rethink our usual way of doing things ... so as not to be complacent [but] unsettled by the living and effective word of the risen Lord.

- Pope Francis, *Rejoice and Be Glad*, article 137