

Preparing for the First Spiritual Conversation

In the first Spiritual Conversation a facilitator will guide a small group in a discussion focusing on this question: **How has God invited you into communion and friendship?**

Please take 30-60 minutes to pray in preparation for that conversation. We recommend using this image or this Scripture passage to guide your prayer. Prayer is a lot like breathing: Everyone can do it! Sometimes it is very natural and easy, and other times there are some steps we can take to help clear things up. You might find these steps helpful:

- 1) Choose where, when and for how long you will pray. Try to stick to your decision.
- 2) Prepare your heart for prayer and invite God to be with you. Have in your heart this question: **God, how have you invited me into communion, or friendship, with you?**
- 3) Read the passage expecting that God has something to say to you in the Scriptures. Reread it slowly—I reread it out loud a couple of times. Maybe use your imagination to think what it might have been like to be there; what are the sights and sounds?
- 4) Have a conversation with God, telling Him what's on your heart and listening to Him.
- 5) Write down the strongest thoughts or feelings that came to you.
- 6) At the end of the prayer time, thank God for the time He spent with you.

Prayer in preparation for the First Spiritual Conversation

God Invites Us into Communion



After the crucifixion, two of the disciples despaired and left the other followers of Jesus. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus came to them, but they did not recognize him. In the image, you see Jesus disguised in poor, penitential clothing. Jesus stirred their hearts as he opened the Scriptures to them. At the end of the day, the disciples invite Jesus to join them for a meal; their invitation is a reflection of the invitation Jesus is making to them—something you see beautifully in the hands of this icon.

Luke 24:13-35: The Road to Emmaus

[On the day of Christ's resurrection] two of Jesus' disciples were going to the village of Emmaus... As they were talking and thinking about what had happened, Jesus came near and started walking along beside them. But they did not know who he was.

Jesus asked them, "What were you talking about as you walked along?"

The two of them stood there looking sad and gloomy. Then the one named Cleopas asked Jesus, "Are you the only person from Jerusalem who didn't know what was happening there these last few days?"

"What do you mean?" Jesus asked.

They answered, "Those things that happened to Jesus from Nazareth. By what he did and said he showed that he was a powerful prophet, who pleased God and all the people. Then the chief priests and our leaders had him arrested and sentenced to die on a cross. We had hoped that he would be the one to set Israel free! But it has already been three days since all this happened.

"Some women in our group surprised us. They had gone to the tomb early in the morning, but did not find the body of Jesus. They came back, saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. Some men from our

group went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said. But they didn't see Jesus either."

Then Jesus asked the two disciples, "Why can't you understand? How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said? Didn't you know that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given his glory?" Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets.

When the two of them came near the village where they were going, Jesus seemed to be going farther. They begged him, "Stay with us! It's already late, and the sun is going down." So Jesus went into the house to stay with them.

After Jesus sat down to eat, he took some bread. He blessed it and broke it. Then he gave it to them. At once they knew who he was, but he disappeared. They said to each other, "When he talked with us along the road and explained the Scriptures to us, didn't it warm our hearts?" So they got up and returned to Jerusalem.

The two disciples found the eleven apostles and the others gathered together. And they learned from the group that the Lord was really alive and had appeared to Peter. Then the disciples from Emmaus told what happened on the road and how they knew he was the Lord when he broke the bread.