



# **Methodology for Discernment in Common at JRS**

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To translate the spiritual ideal of Discernment in Common (DC) into effective, compassionate action, JRS relies on a foundational methodology rooted in Ignatian tradition, adapted to the urgency and complexity of humanitarian work. This **General Method of Communal Discernment** is the framework through which teams move beyond mere discussion to a deeper spiritual or reflective conversation.

## The Foundational Methodological Steps

### (Adapted for JRS Accompaniment)

This process is fundamentally a **shared effort to seek what best serves our mission and the people we accompany (in Ignatian terms, seeking God's will)**, allowing the community to move forward through **unity of spirit**.

### Phase 0: Preparation (Initiating the Spiritual Journey)

This phase is critical for creating the conditions, both spiritual and practical, for meaningful discernment. The aim is to achieve **indifference (freedom from personal bias)** by managing expectations and securing commitment.

- **Initiation and Leadership:** The process must be initiated by the **leader**—a Superior, Director, or Head of Department—who **leads and is responsible for the process** and the eventual decision. It is vital that this leadership is **inspired and formed by Ignatian spirituality**, capable of creating a space of **humility and trust, and openness**.
- **Selecting Participants and Establishing Conditions:** The group participating must be clearly established. Every participant must **know precisely and accept freely** the reasons and conditions for their involvement. For JRS, this often means **creating a space where a diverse group of committed colleagues**—from various cultures, roles, and beliefs—**can fully participate**.
- **Choosing Moment and Place:** Discernment requires **sufficient time** and cannot be done "in a rush". The space must offer **conditions for concentration and peace**, actively avoiding **external noise (no cell phones, no laptops)**.
- **Defining the Decision Rule (A Key to Trust):** If the exercise leads to a decision, the authority **must signal clearly how the final decision will be taken from the beginning**. This is a key element in avoiding frustration. Participants must be **aware of the process of how a decision is taken, including the limit of the decision**.

### Phase 1: Acknowledging the Reality (Grounded in the Lived Context)

Discernment is never abstract; it is always **about something concrete** and must be rooted in the specific situations JRS confronts daily.

- **Acquisition of Knowledge and Full Information:** Participants must acquire the **knowledge necessary** about the matter. This requires **full information, of good quality and accessible to all**, potentially through **reports, experts, or research**.
- **Understanding the Context of Accompaniment:** For JRS, the discernment must be **rooted in the lived realities of refugees**. This means focusing on **understanding the reality** in which they work, including the **causes of massive displacement**. The process should include a **description of the current reality for JRS** and the identification of **potential beneficiaries**.
- **Genuine Inclusion of Refugee Voices:** A best practice—and crucial condition—is ensuring the **Genuine Inclusion of Refugee Voices**. Refugees must be **genuine participants**, not merely consulted. From an Ignatian perspective, **their lived experience reveals God's presence**. Decisions must be taken in consultation with staff and **people**.
- **Dialogue and Clarification:** This is the moment for **dialogue and contrast of viewpoints** to achieve greater objectivity. Even listing **reasons a favor and en contra** of possible options can achieve clarity. The purpose is to ensure all members **comprehend the issues in play**.

## **Phase 2: Personal Reflection and Prayer (Seeking the Spirit's Motion-Attending to Inner Movements)**

After grounding themselves in the mission and the reality, individuals must withdraw for inner work, moving beyond **merely rational or human considerations**.

- **Dedicated Time for Reflection:** Participants dedicate time for **prayer and personal reflection**, ideally in a **calm and unhurried atmosphere**, ensuring they allow **sufficient time** to feel the inner movements.
- **Seeking Interior Freedom:** During this private time, practitioners must **let go of personal agendas, attachments, or fears** and be **freed from bias** to seek the greater good of the shared mission. They pray, reflect and seek **clarity and inner freedom** so as not to be led by **preferences, fears, or prejudices**.
- **Attentiveness to Inner Movements:** The core of this phase is reflecting on the promptings of the Spirit or inner movements:
  - What **conditioning factors** remove my freedom?
  - What brings **light, peace, encouragement, or hope** (consolation)?
  - What causes **unease, fear, turmoil, or discouragement** (desolation)?
  - What do I sense **we are being invited toward** — by God or the Source of Life — as individuals and as a team?
- **Documentation:** It is essential that the responses be **written down**, focusing on sharing the personal reflections.

### **Phase 3: Spiritual Conversation (Listening to the Spirit through Others)**

This phase is characterized by **listening, listening to God’s Spirit or the Source of Life, to one another, and to the concrete realities around us**. It requires **humility, vulnerability, and trust**.

- **Round 1: Sharing Responses:** Each participant **puts in common the written responses: inner motions and calls**. This is done **with simplicity** and **without debate or interruption**. Practicing **“round sharing,” where everyone speaks once before anyone speaks twice**, is a crucial best practice to ensure **all voices are heard**. The sharing must be **from the heart**.
- **Silent Pause:** A period of silence allows participants to **notice what moved them** in the sharing and **honor the diversity** of what was said.
- **Round 2: Resonance (Eco):** Participants share what **most resonated or echoed spiritually** from what others said. This round requires **active and receptive listening**, looking for the **shared insight or inner echo that may guide the group**. This sharing is brief, often in one word or one sentence.
- **Round 3: Synthesis/Moving Forward:** A final round to **synthesize in a phrase or word the fruit of the sharing** or to articulate the **invitation, desire or insight emerged** for the team. The purpose here is to bring life to what lives in the group, focusing on growth rather than immediate conflict resolution.

### **Phase 4: Result and Confirmation (Unity in the Shared Mission)**

The conclusion of the process must ensure that the resulting decision aligns with the good of those we accompany and the core values of JRS.

- **Judging Clarity and Convergence:** The authority or the group (if the decision is collective) judges whether **sufficient clarity and convergence** have been reached.
- **Final Decision:** If clarity is sufficient, the decision is made according to the established rule. If the group has achieved genuine unity, decisions made often carry a **shared peace and collective ownership**.
- **Continuing the Process:** If sufficient clarity is lacking, the group must decide how to proceed: **rest the theme, gather more information, or repeat the exercise of reflection and sharing**. It is important to **reconsider the mission of the Society and the group to clarify intentions** if confusion persists.
- **The Spiritual Mandate:** The final outcome, which should be accepted by all, confirms the process as being one that helps the team recognize guidance toward **the common good**.