



Free Listening Hearts Program Materials

A Primer on Spiritual Discernment: Topic 9

Spiritual Consensus

Spiritual consensus is secular consensus with an added dimension. Consensus literally means perceiving together. No votes are taken. It is not majority rule. It calls for an approach to deliberations in which those involved look for common ground. People articulate their views fully and honestly, which requires an atmosphere of mutual respect. Members of the group listen to one another with an eye to bringing things together. Consensus does not imply unanimity. Rather, consensus rises to the surface as those present feel sufficient opportunity to articulate their thoughts and voice their concerns. It is important that everyone involved is able to express themselves freely. When a sense of the group emerges, some people may not fully agree with it, but they are willing to accept it if they genuinely feel that their views have been expressed adequately and considered with respect.

Generic consensus is primarily rational. Spiritual consensus incorporates rational thinking, but goes beyond it to draw the group together, heart as well as mind. This is where the signs of the Spirit come in (see this Primer, Topic 8). The more signs that appear and the stronger they are, the clearer the spiritual consensus, which requires a deep serenity plus some combination of joy, energy, and/or other indications of the Spirit experienced by the group. If anyone present feels a lingering sense of agitation, it is extremely important that he or she speak up, because that is a negative sign that signals a lack of God's peace, and indicates that more prayer and discernment are needed.

The quest for spiritual consensus draws a group closer to the Source of all that is. Even when the issue is controversial, members of the group deepen their bonds with one another.

By seeking to dwell at God's center where all things are in right relationship, members of the group become one.

– Farnham and Grayson, *Keeping in Tune with God*, p. 34