

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

I. Formative Meaning

Group discussions are a privileged means of intellectual, human, and ecclesial formation. They enable the formandus to move beyond isolated thinking and enter a shared search for truth, wisdom, and deeper understanding. In this sense, discussion is much more than a classroom activity or an exchange of opinions. It is a formative practice that shapes the mind, the heart, and the capacity to relate to others. While personal study remains indispensable, discussion reveals that understanding matures when it is tested, enriched, and refined through the questions, experiences, and insights of other people.

Within the context of formation, group discussions should never be reduced to debate, argument, or intellectual performance. They are not occasions to reward the quickest thinker, the loudest voice, or the most persuasive speaker. Rather, they are opportunities to cultivate attitudes of attentive listening, intellectual humility, respectful dialogue, and openness to growth. A healthy discussion is one in which participants seek not merely to defend their own opinions but to deepen their understanding together. Through this process, learning becomes relational because it is shaped through listening and response, communal because it is enriched by diverse perspectives, and ecclesial because it reflects the Church's way of seeking truth through dialogue, discernment, and attentive listening to the Holy Spirit.

This practice has profound significance for missionary formation. Missionaries do not carry out their vocation in isolation. They live in community, collaborate with people of different cultures and backgrounds, participate in communal discernment, and engage in pastoral situations that require dialogue, patience, and mutual respect. The ability to think with others is therefore as important as the ability to think independently. Group discussions provide a practical school for developing these capacities. They teach formandi to listen before judging, to express convictions with charity, to engage differing viewpoints without defensiveness, and to seek solutions collaboratively rather than individually.

Consequently, group discussions contribute to much more than academic development. They prepare formandi for community meetings, pastoral planning, synodal participation, team ministry, and missionary decision-making. At a deeper level, they cultivate the habits of communion, co-responsibility, and shared discernment that lie at the heart of Claretian missionary life. When approached with seriousness and openness, group discussions become not merely an educational method but a formative path towards intellectual maturity, ecclesial communion, and responsible participation in the Church's mission.

II. Key Skills Developed through Group Discussions

Group discussions are not simply opportunities to exchange ideas. When practised intentionally and accompanied well, they cultivate intellectual, interpersonal, and spiritual capacities that are indispensable for missionary life. Through repeated participation, formandi gradually learn not only *what* to think but *how* to think with others. They develop habits of attentive listening, thoughtful communication, collaborative discernment, and respectful engagement with diverse perspectives. These capacities strengthen academic learning while preparing formandi for community life, pastoral collaboration, and synodal participation. Among the most important skills developed through group discussions are the following:

a. Listening with Openness

One of the first capacities developed through group discussions is the ability to listen with openness. Genuine listening demands far more than remaining silent while another person speaks. It requires an inner disposition of receptivity—a willingness to understand before responding and to

appreciate another person's perspective before evaluating it. Many formandi initially listen selectively, paying attention only to ideas that confirm their own opinions while unconsciously filtering out those that challenge them. Group discussions gradually transform this habit by inviting participants to approach every contribution with curiosity, respect, and intellectual honesty.

Listening with openness also requires suspending premature judgment. Instead of reacting immediately, the formandus learns to attend carefully to the speaker's reasoning, experience, context, and intention. He discovers that another person's perspective may reveal dimensions of reality that he had overlooked or misunderstood. Such listening is therefore neither passive nor naïve. It is an active and disciplined exercise that requires concentration, empathy, and discernment.

This capacity has profound importance for missionary formation. Missionaries constantly encounter people whose experiences, cultures, beliefs, and perspectives differ from their own. Without the ability to listen openly, dialogue easily gives way to misunderstanding, prejudice, or unnecessary conflict. Through regular participation in group discussions, the formandus gradually develops the humility and attentiveness needed to encounter both persons and cultures with genuine respect.

Listening with openness also possesses a spiritual dimension. The person who learns to listen deeply to others becomes more capable of listening to reality, to the community, and ultimately to God. Discussion therefore becomes an exercise in conversion, teaching the formandus that growth begins when he allows himself to receive, rather than merely defend, ideas. In this way, another person's contribution is no longer experienced as a threat but as a gift that may broaden, purify, or deepen one's own understanding.

b. Articulating Ideas Clearly and Respectfully

Group discussions also develop the ability to communicate ideas with clarity, confidence, and respect. Many people either speak impulsively without organising their thoughts or remain silent because they lack confidence in expressing them. Through regular discussion, formandi gradually learn to communicate in a manner that is both coherent and constructive. They discover how to identify the central point they wish to make, express it concisely, and support it with appropriate reasoning or evidence.

Clarity, however, is only one aspect of effective communication. Equally important is the manner in which ideas are expressed. A valuable insight can easily lose its formative impact if presented arrogantly, dismissively, or aggressively. Group discussions therefore train formandi to communicate with charity as well as conviction. They become more attentive to tone, timing, vocabulary, and the effects their words have on others. They learn to challenge ideas without attacking persons, to disagree respectfully without creating division, and to contribute without seeking attention or recognition.

These capacities are essential for missionary life. Whether preaching, teaching, accompanying individuals, facilitating community meetings, or working collaboratively in pastoral settings, missionaries must communicate in ways that enlighten, encourage, and build communion. Group discussions provide a safe environment in which these communication skills can be practised, refined, and strengthened long before they are exercised in ministry.

c. Engaging Difference without Defensiveness

A further capacity developed through group discussions is the ability to engage differing viewpoints without becoming defensive. This is one of the clearest signs of intellectual and human maturity. Inexperienced participants often perceive disagreement as a personal challenge. They may respond by becoming argumentative, rigid, withdrawn, or anxious. Over time, well-facilitated discussions help expose these tendencies and gradually replace them with greater emotional balance, intellectual humility, and openness to dialogue.

The goal is not merely to tolerate different opinions but to learn from them. The formandus gradually recognises that disagreement can become an opportunity to clarify ideas, uncover hidden assumptions, and deepen understanding. Rather than protecting personal opinions at all costs, he learns to examine them critically and, when necessary, to revise them. This capacity fosters interior freedom because the formandus no longer feels compelled to defend his position simply to preserve his self-image.

Developing this freedom is particularly important in missionary life, where diverse cultures, theological perspectives, pastoral approaches, and community experiences regularly intersect. Fruitful collaboration requires the ability to engage differences patiently, respectfully, and creatively. Group discussions provide repeated opportunities to practise precisely these attitudes in a supportive formative environment.

To engage difference constructively, the formandus also learns to distinguish ideas from identity. He comes to understand that changing one's opinion is not a sign of weakness but of growth, and that not having the final word is not a failure. Rather than labelling viewpoints too quickly or reacting to assumptions, he develops the patience to understand another person's reasoning before responding. In this way, group discussions become a genuine school of freedom, helping the formandus seek truth collaboratively rather than competitively.

III. Practical Guidelines and Exercises for Effective Group Discussions

Group discussions bear fruit when they are approached as a disciplined process rather than a spontaneous conversation. Meaningful dialogue begins long before participants gather and continues after the discussion has ended. Preparation enables participants to contribute thoughtfully, attentive participation allows ideas to be explored collaboratively, and reflective follow-up transforms conversation into lasting learning. The following guidelines and exercises are therefore arranged according to the natural rhythm of every fruitful discussion: **before, during, and after the discussion.**

A. Before the Discussion: Preparing for Meaningful Dialogue

Fruitful discussions begin with careful preparation. Participants who come prepared are more capable of contributing thoughtfully, listening critically, and engaging others with confidence. Preparation also demonstrates respect for the topic, the group, and the formative process itself. It transforms discussion from an exercise in spontaneous opinion-sharing into a genuine search for truth.

1. Read, Reflect, and Formulate Questions

Preparation begins with attentive reading and personal reflection. Before the discussion, the formandus should carefully study the assigned text or topic, identify its central ideas, note significant concepts, and reflect on its implications. Rather than reading merely to acquire information, he should ask questions such as:

- What is the author's main point?
- Which ideas challenge or confirm my understanding?
- What remains unclear?
- How does this relate to my experience, faith, or missionary life?

Preparing thoughtful questions encourages curiosity rather than certainty. It also helps the formandus distinguish between immediate reactions and deeper reflection, enabling him to contribute with greater clarity and purpose.

Practical Exercise: Pre-discussion Preparation Sheet

Before every discussion, each formandus completes a simple preparation sheet containing:

- one key insight gained from the reading;
- one question that seeks clarification or deeper understanding;
- one point of tension, disagreement, or uncertainty;
- one possible implication for community life or missionary ministry.

This exercise cultivates intentional participation and prevents discussions from becoming superficial or improvised. Over time, it also strengthens disciplined reading, reflective thinking, and intellectual responsibility.

B. During the Discussion: Participating with Openness and Responsibility

Discussion is much more than speaking. It is a collaborative process of listening, reflecting, questioning, and contributing for the benefit of the whole group. During the discussion, every participant shares responsibility for creating an atmosphere marked by respect, attentiveness, intellectual honesty, and openness to growth.

2. Listen with Attention and Respect

Authentic dialogue begins with listening. Participants should listen to understand rather than merely to prepare their response. They should welcome perspectives that differ from their own, avoid interrupting, and resist the temptation to evaluate prematurely. Respectful listening communicates that every participant deserves to be heard and that truth often emerges through attentive engagement with diverse viewpoints.

Listening also requires patience. Instead of immediately defending one's own ideas, the formandus learns to appreciate another person's reasoning and experience before offering his own perspective.

Practical Exercise: Structured Turn-taking Discussion

At the beginning of the discussion, each participant receives one or two uninterrupted minutes to present his reflections. No responses are permitted until everyone has spoken once. This method:

- protects quieter participants;
- prevents dominant personalities from controlling the conversation;
- encourages careful listening;
- creates a balanced and respectful atmosphere from the outset.

Practical Exercise: The Paraphrase-before-Responding Method

Before responding to another participant, the formandus first paraphrases that person's main idea. The original speaker confirms whether the summary is accurate before discussion continues.

This simple discipline develops attentive listening, reduces misunderstanding, and teaches participants to honour another person's viewpoint before presenting their own.

3. Speak Clearly and Concisely

Each contribution should help advance the discussion rather than dominate it. Participants should express their ideas clearly, briefly, and respectfully, avoiding unnecessary repetition or lengthy explanations. Concise speaking leaves space for others while encouraging disciplined thinking.

Clarity also requires distinguishing facts from opinions, supporting arguments with sound reasoning, and avoiding vague or emotionally charged statements that obscure rather than illuminate the discussion.

4. Remain Open to Learning and Correction

The purpose of discussion is not to prove oneself right but to deepen understanding. Formandi should therefore approach every conversation with intellectual humility, recognizing that their own perspectives are always partial and capable of further development.

Remaining open to correction requires the courage to revise one's views when new insights emerge. It also involves addressing ideas rather than personalities, asking genuine questions, and welcoming constructive feedback without defensiveness.

Practical Exercise: Silent Reflection Round

At an appropriate moment, the facilitator invites the group to remain in silence for two or three minutes. During this time, participants note:

- new insights;
- emerging questions;
- changes in their understanding.

This pause slows the pace of discussion, encourages deeper reflection, and reminds participants that genuine understanding often develops through silence as well as conversation.

Practical Exercise: Role-based Discussion

Participants discuss the topic from assigned perspectives—for example:

- theologian;
- missionary;
- pastor;
- educator;
- cultural observer;
- critical friend.

By temporarily adopting another perspective, formandi learn to appreciate the complexity of issues, broaden their thinking, and develop empathy for viewpoints different from their own. This exercise prepares them for the diverse realities they will encounter in missionary ministry.

C. After the Discussion: Integrating Learning

The formative value of discussion is completed through reflection and synthesis. Without intentional review, valuable insights may remain fragmented or quickly forgotten. Reflecting after the discussion helps participants recognize how they have grown intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, while communal synthesis transforms individual contributions into shared learning.

5. Personal Reflection on the Discussion

Following the discussion, each formandus should take time to reflect on questions such as:

- What new understanding have I gained?
- Which contribution challenged or enriched my thinking?
- When did I experience agreement, resistance, or surprise?
- What have I learned about my own way of listening and participating?

Such reflection develops self-awareness and reveals recurring patterns such as defensiveness, selective listening, excessive caution, or genuine openness to learning.

Practical Exercise: Listening Reflection

Each participant records:

- one idea that deepened his understanding;
- one insight received from another participant;
- one personal reaction or resistance that deserves further reflection.

This exercise shifts attention from personal performance to personal growth, helping the formandus appreciate discussion as a formative encounter rather than simply an opportunity to speak.

6. Communal Synthesis

Every discussion should conclude by identifying together:

- one shared insight;
- one unresolved question;
- one practical implication for community life, pastoral ministry, or missionary service.

Practical Exercise: Post-discussion Synthesis

The group prepares a brief written synthesis highlighting the principal conclusions of the discussion and identifying any questions that require further study or reflection.

This final exercise teaches participants that discussion should ultimately bear fruit in greater understanding, wiser judgment, and practical action. It also reinforces communal responsibility by demonstrating that the group has been engaged not merely in conversation but in a shared search for truth.

This integrated section eliminates the previous overlap between "Practical Guidelines" and "Practical Exercises" by weaving each exercise directly into the corresponding guideline. The flow now follows the natural progression of every discussion: **Preparation** → **Participation** → **Integration**, making it much more intuitive for both formandi and formators.

IV. Common Pitfalls to Address

Group discussions can become deeply formative experiences, but they can also lose much of their educational and spiritual value when certain habits or attitudes remain unexamined. Many of these pitfalls do not arise from ill will but from immaturity, insecurity, or a misunderstanding of the purpose of discussion. Recognizing these tendencies helps formandi participate more consciously and enables groups to cultivate a healthier culture of dialogue. The following are among the most common pitfalls to avoid.

1. Confusing Discussion with Debate

One of the most common mistakes is treating discussion as a debate that must be won rather than as a shared search for truth. When participants become preoccupied with proving themselves right or disproving others, the atmosphere quickly becomes competitive rather than collaborative. Instead of listening carefully, they prepare counterarguments, interrupt frequently, or interpret every differing opinion as a challenge to their own position.

This mentality weakens genuine learning. The purpose of group discussion is not victory but deeper understanding. Formandi should therefore approach discussions with the desire to learn,

clarify, and discern together rather than to defend personal viewpoints at all costs. When truth becomes more important than personal success, discussion becomes a genuine experience of intellectual and ecclesial communion.

2. Speaking to Impress Rather than to Contribute

Another common danger is using discussion primarily as an opportunity to display knowledge, eloquence, or intellectual ability. Some participants speak frequently, not because their contribution advances the discussion, but because they wish to appear knowledgeable or influential. Others use technical language or lengthy explanations that draw attention to themselves rather than to the topic under discussion.

Healthy discussions are marked by service rather than self-promotion. Every contribution should help the group understand the issue more deeply, encourage further reflection, or clarify an important point. Intellectual maturity is measured not by how much one speaks but by how much one's contribution serves the common search for truth.

3. Avoiding Difference or Conflict

Some groups maintain superficial harmony by avoiding disagreement altogether. Participants hesitate to ask difficult questions, challenge assumptions, or express alternative viewpoints for fear of creating tension. While such discussions may appear peaceful, they often remain shallow because important issues are left unexplored.

The opposite extreme is equally harmful. Some groups normalize confrontation, sarcasm, or ideological polarization under the guise of honesty. Here disagreement becomes personal, defensive, or emotionally charged, making genuine dialogue difficult.

Healthy discussion seeks a middle path. Participants should be able to disagree respectfully, challenge ideas without attacking persons, and remain committed to the relationship even when perspectives differ. Constructive disagreement often leads to greater clarity, mutual understanding, and communal discernment.

4. Misusing Silence

Silence has an important place in group discussions. It allows time for reflection, discernment, and the gradual integration of ideas. However, silence can also be misused. Some participants remain silent because of fear, insecurity, lack of preparation, or reluctance to expose their thinking. Others may present withdrawal as a sign of depth or humility when it actually reflects avoidance.

Formandi should therefore learn to distinguish between **fruitful silence**, which deepens reflection, and **evasive silence**, which prevents participation. Likewise, those who naturally speak often should learn that thoughtful pauses can enrich dialogue and create space for others to contribute. Balanced participation includes both attentive listening and responsible speaking.

5. Reducing Discussion to Personal Opinions

Another frequent weakness is treating discussion as nothing more than an exchange of personal opinions. While individual experiences and perspectives are valuable, mature discussion requires participants to support their contributions with careful reasoning, evidence, texts, lived experience, and the wisdom of the Church and the Christian tradition.

When discussions remain at the level of unsupported opinions, they become fragmented and subjective. Formandi should gradually learn to ground their contributions in thoughtful reflection, critical reading, pastoral experience, and sound theological or philosophical reasoning. Doing so strengthens both the quality of the discussion and the intellectual formation of the participants.

Concluding Reflection

Every group develops certain discussion habits over time. Some habits foster openness, trust, and shared discernment; others unintentionally create defensiveness, passivity, or superficiality. Recognizing these pitfalls is therefore not about criticizing participants but about helping them grow in self-awareness and intellectual maturity. As formandi become more attentive to these tendencies, group discussions increasingly become places where truth is sought collaboratively, relationships are strengthened, and missionary disciples learn to think, listen, and discern together.

V. Accompaniment Strategies for Formators

The quality of group discussions depends not only on the willingness of formandi to participate but also on the wisdom with which formators accompany the process. Effective accompaniment goes beyond moderating a conversation or ensuring equal participation. It seeks to understand how each formandus listens, thinks, communicates, responds to difference, and grows through dialogue. In this way, group discussions become a privileged setting for observing intellectual, relational, emotional, and spiritual development. The following strategies can help formators transform discussions into moments of authentic formation.

1. Observe Participation Patterns

Group discussions provide valuable insight into each formandus' personal and intellectual development. Formators should therefore observe not only *what* participants say but also *how* they participate. Some may speak frequently but listen poorly; others may possess thoughtful insights yet hesitate to share them. Some may respond defensively to disagreement, while others may remain silent to avoid exposing their ideas.

These recurring patterns often reveal deeper dynamics such as confidence, insecurity, fear of criticism, the need for approval, excessive self-reliance, or difficulty working collaboratively. Recognising these tendencies enables the formator to accompany each formandus according to his particular needs.

Such observations should always be used with prudence and charity. Quiet participants may need encouragement rather than pressure, while dominant participants may benefit from learning the value of restraint and attentive listening. The aim is not behavioural correction alone but the gradual development of intellectual maturity, self-awareness, and responsible participation.

2. Accompany the Emotional Dimension of Discussion

Although group discussions focus on ideas, they also reveal the emotional world of the participants. Questions, disagreements, and criticism often evoke deeper feelings such as insecurity, fear of being wrong, anxiety, frustration, or the desire for recognition. If these emotional dynamics remain unacknowledged, they may distort the quality of the discussion and hinder genuine learning.

The formator should help formandi recognise these reactions without embarrassment or judgment. Moments of discomfort can become valuable opportunities for growth when participants learn to distinguish disagreement from personal rejection. They discover that questioning an idea does not diminish the dignity of the person who proposed it.

This accompaniment gradually fosters emotional maturity and interior freedom. Formandi become less defensive, more resilient in the face of criticism, and increasingly capable of engaging complex issues with calmness and confidence.

3. Model Dialogical Leadership

Formators teach not only through their instructions but also through the way they conduct discussions. Their manner of listening, asking questions, responding to disagreement, and managing differing viewpoints establishes the culture of dialogue within the formation community.

A formator who listens attentively, acknowledges diverse contributions, asks thoughtful questions, and remains comfortable with complexity demonstrates what mature dialogue looks like. Conversely, a formator who dominates every conversation, dismisses differing opinions, or resolves every discussion too quickly unintentionally discourages genuine participation.

Dialogical leadership therefore means guiding discussions without controlling them. It involves creating an atmosphere in which participants feel both challenged and respected, encouraging exploration without losing direction, and helping the group seek truth together rather than simply arrive at quick conclusions.

4. Integrate Group Discussions into Personal Accompaniment

Experiences during group discussions should become material for individual accompaniment. Conversations with formandi can explore questions such as:

- How did you experience yourself during today's discussion?
- Which contributions challenged you most?
- When did you feel confident or hesitant?
- What did you discover about your way of listening?
- What might God be teaching you through these experiences?

Such reflection helps formandi recognise recurring patterns in their intellectual and interpersonal behaviour. Over time, they become more aware of tendencies such as passivity, excessive control, defensiveness, fear of disagreement, or the desire to dominate conversations. This awareness enables accompaniment to address deeper formative issues rather than isolated behaviours.

5. Address Defensive or Polarised Behaviour with Patience

Occasionally discussions become marked by rigidity, ideological polarisation, or personal confrontation. When this occurs, the formator should intervene calmly and constructively. Rather than correcting behaviour publicly whenever possible, he should help participants understand the deeper attitudes that give rise to defensiveness or hostility.

Helpful interventions may include inviting participants to rephrase their comments more respectfully, asking clarifying questions, encouraging them to consider alternative viewpoints, or slowing the pace of discussion so that emotions can settle. The objective is not merely to restore order but to foster greater intellectual humility, emotional balance, and openness to dialogue.

6. Foster Shared Responsibility for the Quality of Discussion

As the formation community matures, responsibility for fruitful discussion should gradually be shared by the participants themselves. Rather than depending entirely on the formator to maintain respectful dialogue, formandi should learn to safeguard the quality of their own conversations by listening attentively, encouraging quieter members, respecting agreed norms, and helping the group remain focused on the common search for truth.

Periodic evaluation of group discussions can support this process. The community might reflect together on questions such as:

- What helped today's discussion?
- What limited our dialogue?
- Did everyone have the opportunity to contribute?
- How can we improve our discussions in the future?

Such reflection strengthens communal responsibility and prepares formandi for collaborative leadership in missionary communities.

7. Adapt Expectations to the Stage of Formation

Not every formation group is ready for the same depth of discussion. Expectations should therefore correspond to the developmental stage of the formandi.

In the early stages of formation, emphasis should be placed on developing confidence, respectful listening, basic communication skills, and willingness to participate. As formandi mature, discussions can gradually include more critical analysis, constructive disagreement, synthesis of diverse viewpoints, and communal discernment. In ongoing formation, attention may shift towards facilitating discussions, accompanying others, and leading collaborative decision-making.

This gradual progression respects the rhythm of human development while continually inviting further growth. Appropriate challenges encourage maturity; unrealistic expectations often produce anxiety, superficial participation, or discouragement.

Concluding Reflection

The deepest value of accompanying group discussions lies not in producing more articulate speakers but in forming missionaries who know how to seek truth with others. Every discussion offers an opportunity to cultivate attentive listening, intellectual humility, emotional maturity, and communal discernment. Through wise accompaniment, formators help formandi recognise that dialogue is not simply a communication skill but a way of living the Gospel in community.

When accompanied with patience and consistency, group discussions become a school of synodality, preparing future missionaries to collaborate across cultures, engage differing perspectives with respect, and participate responsibly in the life and mission of the Church. In this way, the discussion itself becomes an experience of formation, where minds are enlightened, relationships are strengthened, and hearts are opened to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

VI. Formative Insight

Group discussions are far more than an academic methodology or a means of exchanging ideas. At their deepest level, they are a formative encounter that shapes the way a person listens, thinks, relates, and discerns. The manner in which a formandus participates in discussion often reveals his approach to truth, authority, difference, and community. It shows whether he listens with openness or defensiveness, whether he seeks understanding or merely confirmation, and whether he values collaboration or prefers isolation. In this sense, group discussions become a mirror of personal maturity and an important path of ongoing formation.

For missionary formation, this has particular significance. Missionaries are called to proclaim the Gospel in increasingly diverse cultural, social, and ecclesial contexts. Such a mission demands more than sound theological knowledge or effective communication skills. It requires the capacity to listen attentively, engage differing perspectives respectfully, discern together with others, and seek the common good before personal preference. These attitudes cannot be developed through study alone; they are cultivated through repeated experiences of genuine dialogue within the formation community.

Group discussions also embody the spirit of a synodal Church. They teach formandi that discernment is not simply an individual exercise but a communal journey in which every voice deserves respectful attention and every contribution can enrich the search for God's will. By learning to speak with honesty, listen with humility, and welcome diversity without fear, formandi gradually discover that dialogue is not a threat to truth but one of the privileged ways through which truth is more deeply understood. In this way, group discussions become a practical school of communion, participation, and shared responsibility.

For the Claretian missionary, these qualities are indispensable. Community meetings, apostolic planning, intercultural living, pastoral collaboration, and missionary discernment all require the ability to think with others rather than merely alongside them. A missionary who has learned to

engage in thoughtful dialogue is better prepared to build communities of trust, accompany people with empathy, and collaborate effectively in the Church's evangelising mission. He becomes less reactive, less individualistic, and more capable of integrating diverse perspectives into a common vision.

Ultimately, the value of group discussions lies not in producing better debaters but in forming wiser disciples and more effective missionaries. They cultivate intellectual humility, strengthen communal discernment, deepen mutual respect, and foster a genuine love for truth. When practised consistently and accompanied with wisdom, group discussions become a school of missionary communion, preparing formandi to participate responsibly in the life of their community, the mission of the Congregation, and the synodal journey of the Church. In this way, the habits learned around the discussion table become lifelong dispositions for listening to God, serving others, and discerning together the paths of mission.