

# Engaging Conversations in the Spirit



**Synod Gathering**  
**November 14, 2023**  
**Online**

## The Objective of our Discernment Exercise Today

- ▶ It is to increase our capacity for attentive listening and intentional speaking in groups.
- ▶ It is an opportunity for us to become more familiar with the process of Conversation in the Spirit.
- ▶ It is a way of deepening our understanding of the movement of communal discernment.
- ▶ It is an exercise so that we might become more able to engage similar conversations in our own parishes and communities.





# What outcomes might there be?

A deeper awareness of God's presence

A better sense of identity and mission

A stronger bond of community

The grace of healing and reconciliation

An increase of faith, hope and love

# Obstacles to Communal Discernment

- ▶ Things that affect our capacity to listen and discern:
  - ▶ Personal history, Personality Differences
- ▶ Our Fears
- ▶ Our Resistance to Change
- ▶ Our Desire to Control
- ▶ Communal Desolation...



# Signs of Communal Desolation

Fear and hopelessness predominate, with signs of disunity

Negative self or group images surface

There is a preoccupation with personal agendas

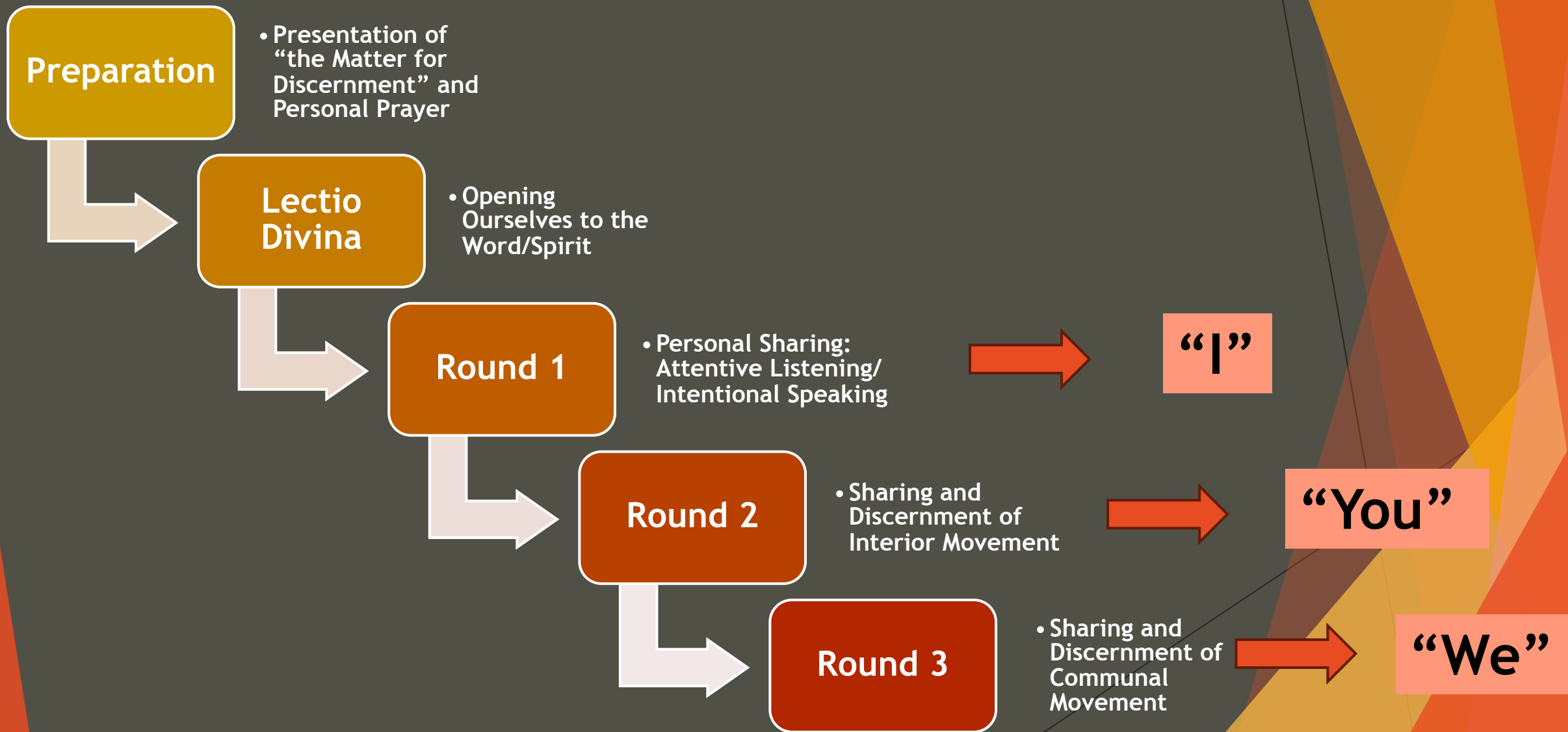
Old, familiar, but ineffectual patterns are repeated

The group is unwilling to face suffering or heal past wounds

There is competition, dishonesty, manipulation, control and arrogance

The integrity of the process threatened by an urgency to complete it

# Conversation in the Spirit: The Process



A hand is shown from the bottom left, reaching upwards towards a bright sun in a hazy sky. The sun is partially obscured by a dark, triangular shape that contains the text. The background is a gradient of orange and yellow, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is one of hope and spiritual seeking.

# What is Discernment?

- ▶ It is an awareness of the Presence of God
- ▶ It is an attentiveness to the effect of God on me (emotions, ideas, desires, impulses)
- ▶ It includes a response: love, fear, generosity, availability, etc.
- ▶ It is a movement to intimacy, union, and mission

# St. Ignatius Rules for the Discernment of Spirits

## “Consolation”

The soul is inflamed with the **love** of the Creator

The soul sheds tears which move it to **love** of the Lord

Increases hope, faith and **love**; and every joy that brings peace in the Lord



# Gift of Self

Movement from Self  
Movement to the Other



**LOVE**



Intimacy  
Sacrifice  
Surrender

“Human Faces  
of Love”

Contrition

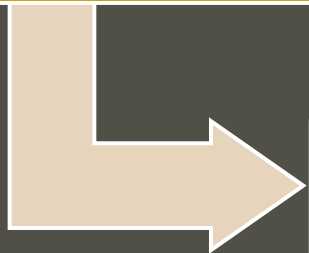
Gratitude

Compassion

# Conversation in the Spirit

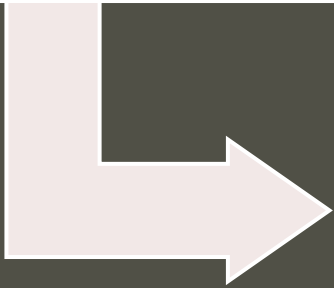
**Preparation**

- Presentation of “the Matter for Discernment” and Personal Prayer



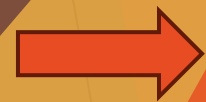
**Lectio Divina**

- Opening Ourselves to the Word/Spirit



**Round 1**

- Personal Sharing: Attentive Listening/ Intentional Speaking



**“I”**

# Round 1: Sharing our Personal Prayer

- ▶ In general, I ask myself the question: when I was deeply aware of God's presence in the prayer? How was I affected?
- ▶ As you review your prayer and prepare for sharing in the group, you might ask yourself:
  - ▶ Which Scripture passages moved me most?
  - ▶ How was I moved? By an insight? An image? A feeling? A desire? A memory? If so, what moved me?
  - ▶ What would I like to share (in the first round) with the others at my table?



# First Round

In the first round of the spiritual conversation, people share something of what occurred during the preparatory personal prayer and/or the matter for discernment. Each person shares what he or she has decided to share, which may also be a decision not to share at this time.

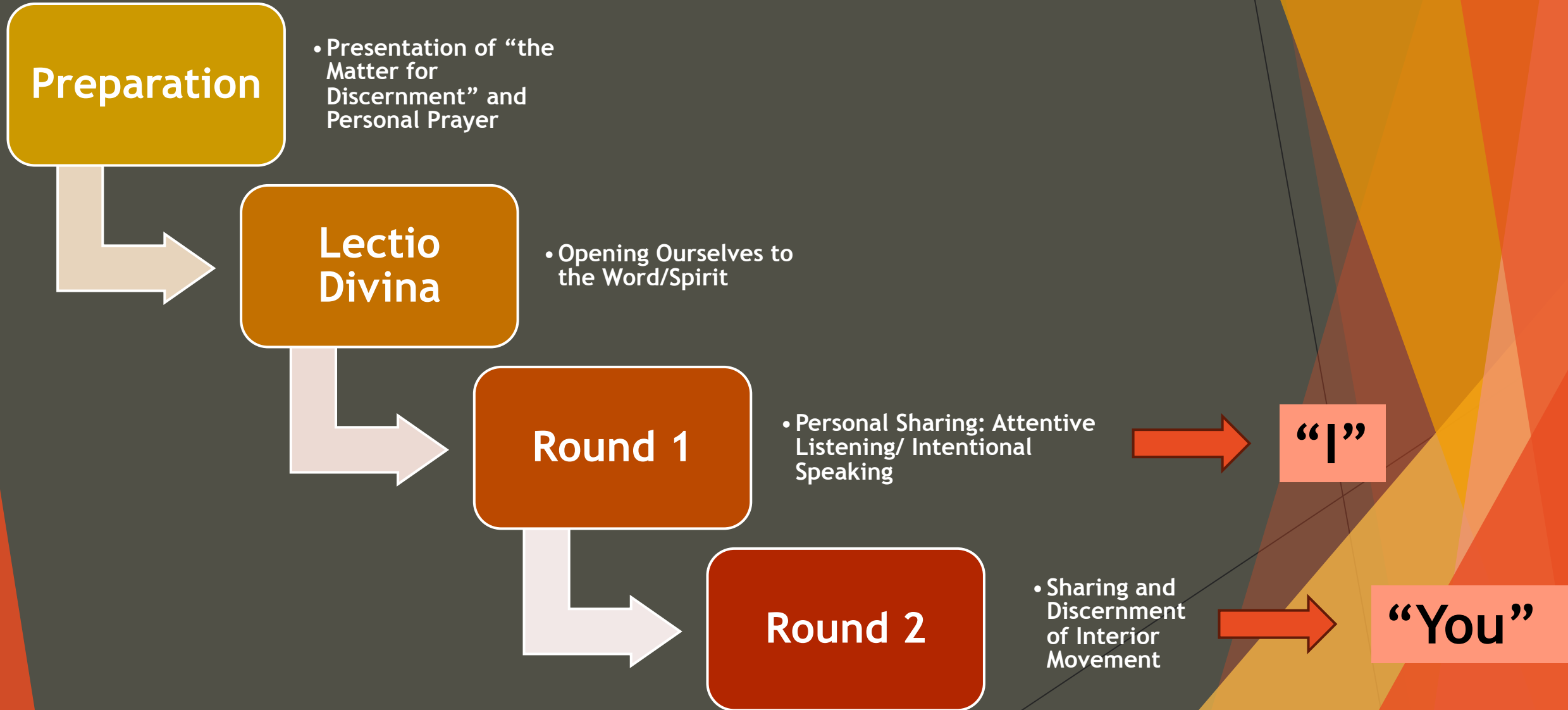
## REMEMBER!!

One does not comment on what another has said during this first round

There should be no interruptions, discussion of anyone's sharing, and above all no criticism or correction.

The time keeper ensures that participants keep their first round sharing within the three-minute limit

# Round 2: From “I” to “You”



# Second Round

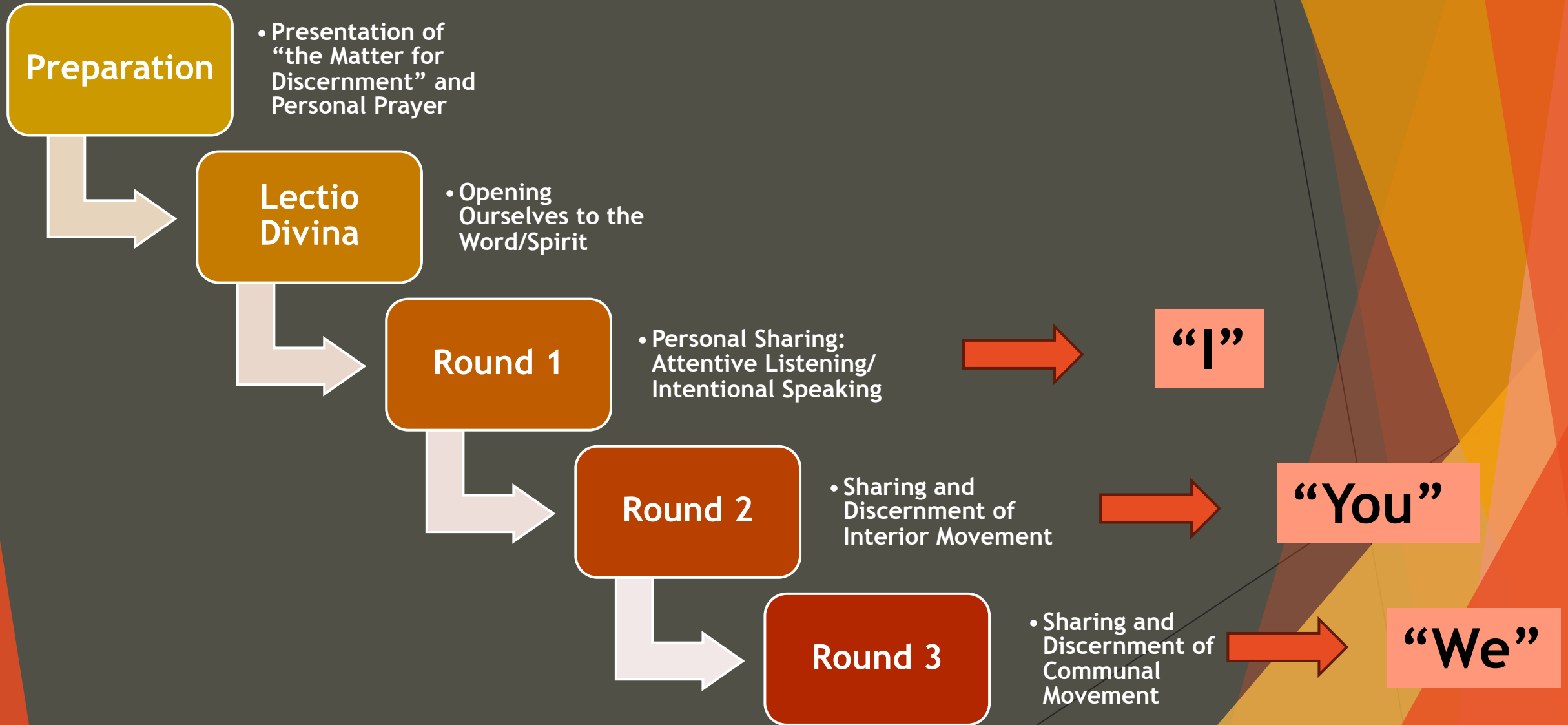
- ▶ The focus of attention in the 2nd round is what was experienced in the 1st round. I am discerning how God is active in each participant.
- ▶ I am being attentive to the presence of God, whom I discern in the presence of my neighbour.
- ▶ I am aware of what is going on in my heart as they speak.
- ▶ I choose one or two things that I heard that had an effect on me (I do not summarize everything that was said in the first round).
- ▶ Here, the signs of the Spirit acting in the group begin to be manifest, and where the conversation begins to take on a communal discernment quality.

## The Second Round: The Movement from “I” to “You”

The Participants are invited to share how they have been affected by what they have heard, and may suggest possible “effects” like these:

- ❑ What did you hear?
- ❑ Were you struck by a common theme? By something absent but which you expected to hear?
- ❑ Were you especially touched by a particular sharing?
- ❑ What is your response now, as we process the first round?
- ❑ Did any insights occur to you? What were they?
- ❑ Where did you experience harmony with the others as they shared?

# Third Round: From “I” and “You” to “We”





# Third Round: Awareness of the Spirit, Communal Consolation



Convergence



Consensus



Creativity



Peace



Contrition, Gratitude, Compassion



# TIPS FOR THE SCRIBE

**Listen Attentively**

**Quiet your “own” voice; listen to the fruit of the Spirit**

**Look for opportunities of convergence at the table**

**Summarize: A synopsis should capture as many perspectives as possible without repetition**

**Seek clarity as needed before summarizing**

**Read the summary aloud to ensure agreement from the table**

# Signs of Communal Consolation

- ▶ **First, a group recognizes itself as loved by God, as an instrument of God;**
- ▶ **Secondly, there is an increase of faith, hope and love with a capacity to listen to one another;**
- ▶ **Thirdly, we awaken to God's joyful presence a desire for inclusivity, and gratitude;**
- ▶ **Fourthly, there is new freedom for renewal and transformation;**
- ▶ **And finally, "servant leadership" becomes the model for decision-making.**

# The Function of Summaries



An opportunity for evaluation, gratitude, communal self-awareness;

Provides some forward movement to the conversation, and identifies the next steps in the process;

A means to engage intentionally in the quality of the conversation, and its spiritual character (consolation or desolation);

Explores and deepens our spiritual reality and identity.