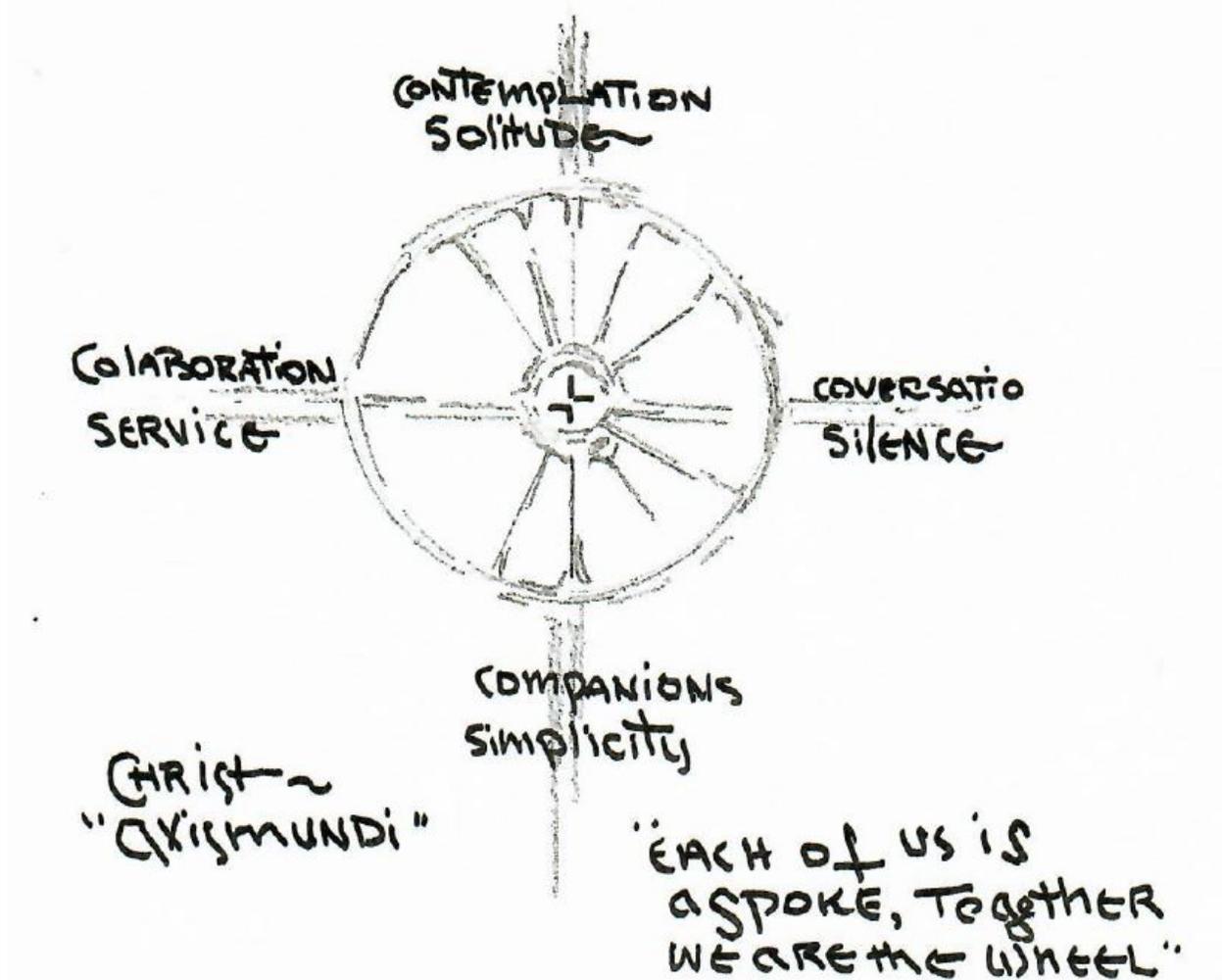


Board of Trustees April Board meeting 2020:

4/21/20

To deepen our understanding of and integration of the four C's (S's):

Collaboration	(Service)
Conversatio	(Silence)
Contemplatio	(Solitude)
Companioning	(Simplicity)



Used for both our zoom Board prayer and meeting and our next Conveners meeting for the Council for Spirit and Life, would be an illustrative diagram; the imaging of our core visual teaching element of the wagon wheel with Christ as the center (Axis Mundi) with the four directions out from the axle and its spokes.

Christ is the axle, the spokes are ourselves; **“each of us is a spoke, together we are the wheel.”** Encircled the wheel has in four directions the cross-sections, vertical and

horizontal; collaboration, conversation, contemplation and companioning and our four S's, "Sisters of Lady Wisdom" and their dynamic relationships.

**Collaboration (Service)** for us is first working together, not working on a common project together, and so the relationship with those who are collaborating is substantiated by the other three elements of our will for soul-full organization.

As Franciscan women and men, we know and believe that "love works." In fact, we are understood to be a spirituality of love in action. Our faith, hope and love manifests itself in our action for one another and the world, Sister Earth and all around us. Our primary collaborative efforts are about evangelizing, whether it be preparing a meal, being on the road or campus to share the Gospel and our personal stories. If our ministry is reflective of the Mountain it will always be collaborative, we working together for a particular effort.

**Conversatio (Silence)**, different than even conversation, but in particular different than discussion, would have the focus be the opening to the truth that each other **is**, by way of our own human experience, our "reflective dynamic." (1) That is to say, that each of us is discovering meaning and life itself and hopefully God in some way in our lives and are also involved in the activities of God, which is to say being evangelizers. Through conversatio we share with each other, we cross over into each other's lives, bearing our own stories of the activities of grace and God's presence in us and the gifts God has given us to be evangelizers (women and men who proclaim the Good News through their activity and life with/among others). Francis had the word "per" (inter) in his documents which, for him, meant going, being "**among**" and suggests a certain

(1), (2) Michel W. Blastic, O.F.M. Conv. – "Contemplation and Compassion: A Franciscan Ministerial Spirituality."

intimacy of life. (2) Our primary form, then, of communication would be conversatio so that depth always emerges. Therefore, we take things with breadth and depth, not in a self-conscious or analytical way, but in the sense of the joy of receiving and holding all that there is in what might be shared; the personal and the project, the individual and the communal.

**Contemplatio (Solitude)**: Contemplation continues to be a primary call to the Mountain and so we are gathered within and then beyond what we normally call prayer to the "four S's," in particular **silence** and **solitude** in a **simple** setting. This allows us to be in touch with the one who is "all in all" and in whom we "live and move and have our very being." St. Francis addressed Jesus, the Christ, as "Dear Teacher," having this depth of affiliation and affection for a loving God manifest in the Incarnate One. We too would follow a deep and real "this world" experience of God's presence and be led into the depths and heights of that contemplative walk.

Contemplation for us is not monastic, it is fraternal. It is not located in a building, but in relationships with one another and the world. Thus, we use the “fratras,” which has a larger meaning than “brothers,” but is a warmer and more alive term than merely “community.” So as women and men the extensiveness of the sense of “one world, one God, one faith, one baptism” becomes very enriching for us when we also address and engage with the many, though we are, we are one body. The “many” is celebrated in contemplation and each of the individuals, the highly particular and specific, is graced and wonderful to behold!

**Companioning (Simplicity)** might contain within it “mutual mentoring” and acknowledges the site and place, which is the relationship in which we learn a great deal. It also feels as an inclusion of ourselves, not just a specificity around a direction, a task or a project. It is using personal language that makes it a Franciscan choice here. From its roots both in modern and ancient languages, it helps us hear the “breaking of the bread” (com-panos) with one another, and so much of what we call *conversatio* happens when we are companions or companioning one another. Typically, this might be one-on-one, but it also might be a group of companions and in that setting, motivated by hope, love and faith, there would be wisdom arising which is, in our tradition, practical knowledge. It is also, in our tradition, Franciscan ways of coming to know multiple pedagogy's that emerge and are shared and learned from one companion to another. They are passed on, as all wisdom is, through relationship and *conversatio*.

#### Further notes:

The Mountain's tradition offers an infusion of companioning so that everything is full of the joy and activity of relationship, even solitude or contemplation, which continues to have a taste and echo of the commonweal, everyone's welfare, one steps aside into time not only “by themselves.” Because we are never truly and fully alone in our solitude. We certainly are not reclusive. We include each other in consciousness and in the depth of ourselves; we are in union with all of creation in the world and within that union with our Creator God and Christ, the “one whom all things are made.”  
(Colossians)

#### Addendum:

The reason for developing this wagon wheel mandala at this time, showing the visual coherence of our primary elements of our life, the four S's (Silence Solitude, Simplicity and Service) along with **Collaboration, Conversatio, Companioning and Contemplatio**, is *to manifest visually* with one another and comment on here so that we

can see the *wholeness* and *integrity* of our particular *Christic spirituality*. This is *truly operational*, it moves to activity as it flows up and out of a deeply held faith and hope in Christ who “makes all things new.”

It becomes another way of visualizing our core commitment and our core mission, which is “to join with Jesus Christ to make all things new.” The wagon wheel then is an image that wants to move, come down off the wall in each of our hearts and draw others into the activity or movement with Christ always as the core/the axle/the axis mundi. With that centrality and ourselves represented and manifest as spokes, the others become those correlatives of our lives, they co-relate, with one another and with us, the intentionality of our living the Gospel life in a Franciscan manor at Mt. Irenaeus.

The rim of the wagon wheel can be thought of as the rest of the creative order, cosmic as well as the earth, and its marvelous and holy operations.