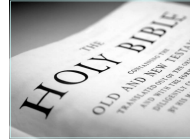
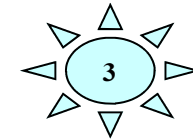


But there are obstacles to listening to Scripture—as well as human obstacles, that hinder our listening to God. Listening to Scripture requires that we remove any barriers to listening. We may think that such barriers protect us, but they actually keep us from growing.

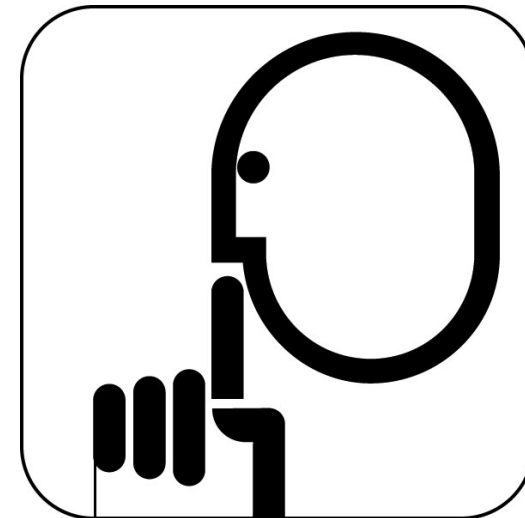


- When we read Scripture we trust God to share with us.
- When we read the Scriptures within our faith community we are unlikely to go astray. Rather, it keeps us on track and allows us to test our understanding.
- Alone we can be misled. Being comfortable is not a sign of truth. It may simply mean that we don't want to be disturbed!

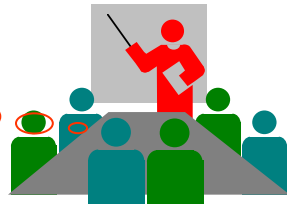
As we move forward let us, therefore, keep in mind the importance of **LISTENING**. We must work at removing obstacles—this is an important part of the conversion that takes place within the OFS. As St Francis reminded his brothers: 'Wherever the brothers may be and meet one another, let them show that they are members of the same family. Let each one confidently make known his need of the other, for if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, [Cf. I Thes 2.7] how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit!'



Listening



I *am* listening—
but is it attentive
listening?



Attentive listening means we are able to:

- listen to God and recognise the ways in which he speaks to us
- listen to one another so we hear what's being said
- listen to our own spirit to see how it is touched by the Holy Spirit
- listen to the wonders of God's creation in universe and people
- listen to the signs of the times and express our faith accordingly
- listen to our imagination and discover how we can extend our understanding of Paschal mysteries in a way that leads to salvation
- listen to Scripture and let it permeate our lives

But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.
O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!
Then I would quickly subdue their enemies,
and turn my hand against their foes. [Ps 81.11-14]

- Listening is demanding; we must put aside our own agendas and listen to another's story
- Attentive listening can be difficult...



What are the ob-
stacles to atten-
tive listening?

- Sometimes we hear what we want to hear rather than what is being said. Generation gap?
- Personal experiences get in the way
- Stubborn convictions keep us from hearing what challenges/threatens us
- Distrust, dislike or fear of others around us
- Tiredness, anger or illness can drain our powers of concentration
- A fundamental unwillingness to change our way of thinking, or our way of life, no matter what is said

So, we need to ask for grace to be open to fresh ideas and avoid the traps of rejecting them out of hand; refusing to change. Sometimes our pride means we refuse to listen because we think we already have all the answers!

As St Paul reminds us, as Christians we will not continue to be asleep, 'but we will all be changed' because—

He will change our humble bodies,
so that they may be conformed to his glorious body,
by the power that also enables him to make
all things subject to himself. [Phil 3.21]