

An Understanding of “Discernment”

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/upload/vocations-understanding-discernment.pdf>

How does one understand the concept of discernment. Discernment means to “separate apart” so we might distinguish something in order for it to be perceived clearly. It is the way in which we identify God’s will within the context in which we live. Most of us do know God’s will because it has been revealed through the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. However, there are times when God’s will is not so clear and we realize that we need to search for what God is asking of us.

Discernment is an art and it is learned by doing, not just reading about it. It is a function of an individual’s personal relationship with the Lord. When we desire to do God’s will, are willing to be open to God and have a solid knowledge of God, then discernment is possible. Therefore, prayer is an essential component to the process of discernment. To be a truly discerning person, we need to be **humble, charitable and courageous**.

As we become more familiar with the Lord in prayer, *we will come to know that the “small still voice” speaks in peace never in turmoil, anxiety or restlessness.*

An Approach to Good Choices

<http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/an-approach-to-good-choices/>

The Ignatian approach to good choices rests on several presuppositions:

- 1) First it assumes that **the alternatives being considered are all positive, constructive, and morally correct**. The person making the decision is someone who is spiritually maturing and who wants to make the choice that will lead to a deeper relationship with God.
- 2) The Ignatian approach to **good choices emphasizes freedom**. Making a free decision means that we set aside our own preferences and preconceptions and strive to be free of social pressures and psychological strains. We carefully examine our motives and desires. This isn’t easy. Much of the prayer and reflection in Ignatian decision making has to do with achieving the detachment necessary to choose freely.

The Ignatian approach **requires work**. It asks that we make every reasonable effort to find God’s will. This involves a sincere commitment to pray and to achieve self-knowledge. We need to gather all the relevant information about our alternatives and carefully weigh all the circumstances and likely outcomes. Decision making in the Ignatian mode involves both the heart and the mind