
Thoughts about Making Choices

- I keep one conviction first: God keeps making me, momentarily, for this original purpose—to go back to God and give God my love.
- Some first choose to get rich, and then they decide to serve God as rich people. Some decide that they more or less have to marry and after that they can figure out how to serve God. Some choose to get ordained priests, and then ask God (really, require God) to accept their service as priests. Some reach for power, or popularity, or tenure, or successful careers—and so on, determined to serve God as powerful, popular, tenured, successful. I see this inversion as mistaken. Putting some creature first is not Jesus' way and not mine.
- When it comes to any serious decision about my life, I intend first to serve God and to love God—and then I will figure out what else to intend.
- I believe I come to know what God wants in many ways—commandments, the teaching of the Church, the advice of holy people and loving friends, my own spirit. I know that God leads me, by interior desire and inclination, and by exterior circumstance.
- What choices do I need to think about in the Exercises? Well, I have already chosen against anything sinful. But all of us have to choose among many good alternatives.
- During the Ignatian Exercises, I may be weighing life choices: marriage, single life, public service, religious congregation, priesthood, ministry, serious career. "Life-style," too, since it shapes much of what I am free to do and not to do. If I am working on this basic choice, I will find the Ignatian Exercises an excellent context in which to come to a decision based on my principle of serving God first. I can make this an occasion to center myself so that I am not led by an unbalanced desire or prejudice into a basic choice that is not authentic to myself and my God-given original purpose.
- What about a serious permanent decision already made? Say I'm married or a religious or a clinician. If I consider my original decision a good one, well made, then I have only to let God teach me how to live it out well. If I consider my original decision a bad one and I am free to change it, then I pray for God's help to know what and when to change. For instance, I might be coming to the end of an unhappy period in temporary vows, or I turned out to be a poor clinician. The Ignatian Exercises generally offer a fine context in which to pray and come to a decision about what to do.