

Discernment

“ I set before you life and death. Choose life.” **Dt 30:19.**

“Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind to govern thy people, that I may discern between good and evil.” **1 Kg 3:9.**

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ”
Heb 4:12.

“It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.”
Phil 1:9-11.

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God.” **1John 4:1.**

“The people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Moved by that faith it tries to discern in the events, the needs and the longings which it shares with others of our time, what may be the genuine signs of the presence and purpose of God”
Vatican II The Church in the Modern World, 11.

“Discernment is essential; it falls upon those who are in charge of the Church, those to whose special competence it belongs, not to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good. In this way the common good of the Church, to which the gifts of the Spirit are ordained, is fostered.” **Pope Paul VI, 1973.**

“Discernment has 3 principles. The first, is “faithfulness to the authentic doctrine of the faith.” Second, “All spiritual gifts are to be received gratefully; and third, “only agape love makes the perfect Christian, pleasing to God.” **Pope Paul VI, May 1975, Repeated by Pope John Paul II in 1981.**

“ Discernment is a process that requires prayer, dialogue and evaluation. It is both personal and communal, involving family and friends as well as colleagues and mentors, “
USCCB, Co-Workers in the Vineyard, 2005.

“A variety of experience may characterize the initial period of discernment, including increased sacramental and liturgical practices, retreats and days of prayer and reflection, and individual or group spiritual direction.” **Ibid.**

“Throughout the discernment process a person needs to ask: what talents, virtues and limitations do I process that indicate my ability to serve God’s people” **Ibid.**

“Neither discernment nor determination of suitability is a one time process. Prayerful discernment should be the habit of a lifetime for all committed Christians.” **Ibid.**

“Lay ecclesial ministries should help the faithful discern their gifts and charisms, affirm these gifts and nurture their call to generous service. “ **Ibid.**

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.

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Discernment is a spiritual process of choosing God and God's will over all other options for oneself and others. It is a gift of seeing situations with Jesus' eyes and making Jesus choices for oneself and others. Discernment arises out of a person's personal relationship with God, a deep knowledge of God's presence based on a healthy spiritual life and a consistent sacramental life. As a process it asks, "What would Jesus do?" When choices are made there is a greater love and peace for the person who is discerning and for those involved in the process.

Questions to share

- 1. Which passage touches you or burns in your heart the most? Why?**
- 2. How have you exercised this gift in the past?**
- 3. How are you now exercising this gift in ministry?**
- 4. Do you see new ways you can exercise this ministry in the future?**