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missioners

Where The Compassion Of The Faithful Transforms Lives

"The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." - Frederick Buechner

DISCERNMENT IS NOT...

- ... an entrance into knowledge
- ... a tapping into God's mind to find out what God's will is
- ...a promise of rightness over wrongness
- ...focusing on myself and my decisions
- ...asking God to bless my decisions after making them
- ...a set of skills to learn or some magic formula for my life-story
- ...a judgment on what is sinful
- ...done in isolation
- ...finding the RIGHT answer
- ...making a list of pros and cons and choosing based on which list is longer
- ...interviewing – getting the job or getting into the program and then deciding if it fits
- ...a sudden zap from beyond

DISCERNMENT IS...

- ... drawing on what is already in the heart – the God-life already at work
- ...an opening up to discover what God is already doing in my life
- ...becoming more open and vulnerable to the paschal mystery – the dying and rising in life; faith-filled choice
- ...focusing on relationship with God
- ...ever deeper listening to God and my heart
- ...a way of life – ongoing, walking around with God
- ...recognition of God's desire in my life
- ...communal, done with person(s) who help us be more free and aware of obstacles
- ...discovering only the next step in the journey
- ...at times, allowing one compelling reason/feeling to speak the loudest
- ...a mutual, honest exploration of the next step at this time in my life
- ...something that emerges with hard work and close attention

**Adapted from Benedictine tools for discernment*

OBSTACLES to DISCERNMENT

Physical Factors

- Tiredness, exhaustion, chronic fatigue
- Time: moving through life too quickly or not at all; procrastinating

Emotional and Psychological Factors

- Attachments to persons, places, objects, or experiences
- Rigidity in attitudes
- Lack of imagination – imagination is a capacity to arrive at truth
- Fragmentation (repression of feelings around life issues, sexuality, body, etc.); lack of awareness of full range of feelings and desires; lack of acceptance of self
- Images of self (negative self-image is equated with inability to accept self as really are: created by God with purpose, loved unconditionally)
- Fear of past, future, God, people, stability, change, new, old, moving, standing still

HOW DO WE HANDLE THESE OBSTACLES?

- Through a deep trust in God, who knows our limitations and weaknesses better than we know ourselves
- Expect blocks and obstacles to appear; watch for them
- When blocks do appear, acknowledge and address them as best as one can

TOOLS FOR DISCERNMENT

- OBEDIENT LISTENING – listen to the voice calling from within oneself... to awareness, to life circumstances
- HUMILITY calls us to truth
- BE STILL! – respond to the invitation to be silent, to reflect
- STABILITY and a supportive atmosphere
- CONVERSION – recognize and be transformed by the face of God in relationships with others
- FAITH-SHARING – being open and vulnerable with others
- SELF-AWARENESS – pay attention to what erupts inside self, whether positive, negative, indifferent
- ATTENTIVENESS TO FEELINGS which are the raw material for discernment
- RADICAL OPENNES TO LOVE OF GOD
- IMAGINATION