

Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Lenten Mission 2017
Discernment in Everyday Life
Rev. Victor Ingalls, Director of Vocations, Archdiocese of Mobile
Talk 1: Hearing God Speak in Prayer

Opening Song: Come Holy Ghost

Can't Make God Speak but What CAN we do?

- *Image of the Effort of a Farmer...can prepare the soil, but cannot make it rain
- *Image of preparing for a Friend to come over....can invite and prepare...but cannot force them to show up

Looking to St. Ignatius of Loyola and his Spiritual Exercises for guidance.

- **Discerning the Will of God: An Ignition Guide to Christian Decision Making*
by Timothy M. Gallagher, OMV [talk heavily based on this book]
- **Discerning Your Vocation: A Young Adult's Guide*
by the Community of the Beatitudes

Surely God calls us to do good and not evil. But the toughest decisions in life are between various good things we are presented with. These are the decisions we will deal with.

Necessary Foundation to Be Able to Hear God Speak to you clearly: Must believe that..

- 1.) God Loves You
- 2.) God is For You
- 3.) God is Good for You

These lead to the **Necessary Disposition** one must have to hear God clearly:

WHATEVER YOU WANT LORD

“Not my will but yours be done...” (Luke 22:42)

“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done...” (Matthew 6:10)

[Fr. Victor—Turning Point Prayer—“*God, I have everything in life that I want right now...if you want me to do something else, you are going to have to take away what I have. Because I am too weak to give it up on my own. I do want to do what you want for me life.*”]

“To do your will is my DELIGHT.” (Psalm 40:9)

Three MODES or WAYS of Discerning/Figuring Out what is God is saying you in Prayer:

Throughout each mode. Important to run your experience by a competent spiritual guide, mentor or director. Ideally you would open yourself to God's voice by using these three Modes in the Order they are presented: Try 1 and if not clear then 2 and if not clear then 3

I. **Clarity Beyond Doubt**—The Burning Bush Experience

- *God speaks in such a clear way it is undeniable
- *Another Example: Archangel Gabriel to the Blessed Mother

*How to Respond: 1) Gratitude to God → 2) ACT!

[Fr. Victor Example: *In the woods—Image of Saying Mass as Priest came during prayer. Flooded with Peace, Joy & Excitement he had never known—Clarity Beyond Doubt...but he did doubt and did NOT act*]

II. **Discernment of Spirits**—Over a period of time, in considering different options, paying attention to how you feel in prayer: **Consolation** (feeling Peace, Joy, Calm, Confident, Simplicity, Serenity) vs **Desolation** (Fear, Restlessness, Distraction, Frustration, Anger, Confusion)

*Consolation is produced by hearing/encountering the **Voice of God**.

*Desolation is produced by hearing encountering one of three other Voices:

-**Your Voice** (in its brokenness): tends to be Self-Critical, overly hard on oneself

-The **World's Voice**: "Never Enough," You are only as good as your last Performance, It's all about you, You are Your Appearance

-The **Devil's Voice**: FEAR, SHAME, anxiety, doubt, hate, emptiness, agitation

[Fr. Victor Example: *Throughout HS & College. In times of prayer. Felt Consolation consistently in prayer—silence, Mass, reading scripture*]

Most Helpful Methods of Prayer to Accompany discernment:

1) Time Before Blessed Sacrament—in the same room with God

2) Reading the Gospels & Imagining yourself in scenes with Christ—God became man and lived on earth...and these are inspired accounts of what he did and SAID

—>these words are living words and can speak to you.

Also Helpful to keep a *Prayer Journal*—Mark the experiences you are having in prayer each day. Then look back over a week, month, etc. and see where you experienced God's consolation most consistently

III. **Preponderance of Reasons/The Four Columns**

-Important to do in a time of Tranquility—when stress and emotions of the decision have died down

-All from the perspective of—What will Help Advance God's Kingdom

One Option: Advantage Column + Disadvantage Column

Other Option: Advantage Column + Disadvantage Column

-Prayerfully fill them out, Take them to Prayer, Show them to a trusted Spiritual Guide

[Fr. Victor Example: *Spending a summer at hospital. Then spending a summer as the "intern" at a parish. Comparing what I would be doing in both settings to advance God's kingdom*]

*Keep in mind **the growth the Lord desires to achieve in you along the way**....not just about the destination but the journey itself is part of what God is perhaps saying to you

***Be Not Afraid** to open yourself completely to hearing the Voice of God speak! Whatever he will say will be for your good:

For I know well the plans I have in mind for you [...]plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope.

When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you.

When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart,

I will let you find me [...] and I will change your lot

(Jeremiah 29:11-14)

Closing Song: What Wondrous Love is This