

MAKING A GRACED DECISION
“THE ELECTION”
THREE TIMES FOR MAKING A CHOICE
METHODS FOR MAKING A GRACED CHOICE

1. When it is absolutely clear #175

- a. No movement of spirits
- b. Check motives
- c. Make the choice
- d. Ask for confirmation

2. When one experiences movements of the spirits #180

- a. Clarify options #178
- b. Keep ends and means clear #179
- c. Pray for
 - + Wisdom (clarity and grace of a good choice) #180
 - + Total spiritual liberty (Pray *agree contra* if necessary)
 - + To surface a “touchstone” experience
- d. Gather all the data, attending to movements of consolation/desolation
 - cf. Rules for Discernment, Week II #329-336
 - Do not make a choice during desolation #318
- e. Project self into each choice, applying the “touchstone”
- f. Make the choice according to “the end for which we are created”
- g. Ask for confirmation of your choice #183

3. When one is very tranquil, not moved either way by the spirits #177

- A. The First Way: Use of the Intellect #178
 - 1) Clarify the options #178
 - 2) Keep ends and means clear; strive for indifference #179
 - 3) Pray for the grace of clarity and a good choice #180
 - 4) Gather all the data
 - 5) List/weigh carefully all the pros and cons for each choice #181
 - 6) Choose that which is most reasonable #182
 - 7) Ask God for confirming peace #183
- B. The Second Way: Using the imagination #184
 - 1) Clarify the options #178
 - 2) Keep ends (Love of God) and means (Love of Creatures) clear
 - 3) Use imaginative prayer
 - a. Pretend you are a spiritual director #185
Follow your own advice
 - b. Pretend you are on your death bed #186
What would you wish you had chosen?
 - c. Pretend you are standing before God in judgment #187
What would you wish you had chosen?
 - d. Make your choice
 - e. Ask for confirmation

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

DISCERNING THE SPIRITS

FIRST RULE OF THUMB: I can tell where a movement is coming from if I can tell where it is leading.

Sorting through the movements within me

1. Which come from God?
2. Which come from some other source?
 - a. outside myself
 - b. myself
 - c. evil
3. How do I sort them out?

SECOND RULE OF THUMB: The biggest clue to movements is consolation/desolation.

Consolation and Desolation

THIRD RULE OF THUMB: The movement of the spirits is always determined by my basic orientation.

Recognition of the pattern

1. of the Holy Spirit
2. of the evil spirit

REFLECTING ON VALUES



Let yourself become quiet and peaceful.

Turn to Jesus

and ask Him to take you into His time and space
so you can learn from Him.

1. Reflect on the Gospels:

What values are evident in Jesus' behavior?

What values are evident through His teaching?

2. Reflect on yourself in your everyday life:

What values are evident in your behavior?

What values are evident in what you say?

3. Reflect on society as a whole: media, commercials, politics, etc.

What values does society seem to support?

What values are evident in the words our society preaches?

4. Reflect on yourself as a member of this society:

Which values do you wish to nourish as operative in your life?

Which values in your life do you find theoretical?

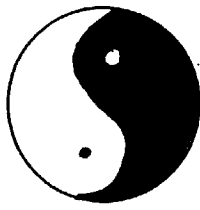
5. Look into your own heart:

What are the areas of unfreedom within you: biases, mind sets, cultural addictions
that may well inhibit you from practicing the values that you cherish?

What are the strengths of your Gospel-self that nourish you as you try to live as a
disciple of Jesus?

Let this enter into your discerning about becoming a Permanent Deacon.

Take any part of this and paint whatever comes to mind.



EXPERIENCING CONSOLATION/DESOLATION

Settle yourself for prayer.

Move slowly into your still point
and become aware of God's presence.

Ask God to recall to your memory
the pattern of consolation and desolation
that is uniquely yours.

The following questions may help:

When have I felt close to God?

- Happy to be about the things of God
- True to my deepest self
- One with the universe
- Delighting in prayer
- Blessed with new or deeper insights

When have I felt the absense of God?

- Confused about myself
- Clouded in understanding
- Not wanting to pray, putting it off
- Avoiding the things of God
- Wanting to hide from God/self

Give enough time to this memory for adequate recall. Is there any pattern?

Savor again the joys of consolation.

Can you describe one of your times of consolation?
To what would you compare it? ("Consolation is like...")

Feel again the emptiness of desolation.

Can you describe a period of desolation you have experienced?
To what would you compare it? ("Desolation is like...")

RECOGNITION OF PATTERNS OF HOLY SPIRIT AND EVIL SPIRIT

IN CONSOLATION
(Orientation to God)

IN DESOLATION
(Orientation away from God)

HOLY SPIRIT

Is in charge, reigns

Facilitates movement
toward God

Makes growth easy for us
- like a drop of water
on a sponge
- like a breeze through an
open window

EVIL SPIRIT

Can easily take control

Facilitates movement
away from God

Tempts us with the unholy

EVIL SPIRIT

Goes underground

Tries to trick us
by pretending to be the
Holy Spirit

Starts with good suggestion
but moves us away from path

HOLY SPIRIT

Tries to get our attention
by introducing discomfort
- like a drop of water
on a stone
- like the wind
rattling a shutter

PRINCIPAL REASONS FOR DESOLATION

1. We've become lazy, negligent.
2. God wishes to "try" us. Will we persevere?
3. God wishes to leave us to our own efforts, since we want so much to be in control.
4. We need to stretch our spiritual muscles.
5. The rhythm of life
6. We are making poor choices because we are not discerning.