



# Discernment: A Life Long Journey with the Lord

Based on the wisdom of St.  
Ignatius of Loyola, other  
saints, and personal  
reflections



# Prayer (relationship with God)!

- We do nothing if we do not begin here.

Lord, open our hearts to your love, your grace, and your will for each of us. That we may hear you say, “Fear not, I am with you always” and “I know well the plans that I have in mind for you.” Help us to have the courage to freely respond to the permanent State of Life Vocation that you are calling us to as we say with Samuel: “Here I am Lord; I come to do your will.” For there is no greater joy in this world than to faithfully follow you, Jesus, on the specific path and vocation of love to which you are calling us.





# What is Discernment anyway?

- What do you know about discernment?
- What things can or have you done to discern anything in life?



*Knowledge that God has a Plan-Purpose for you!!!*

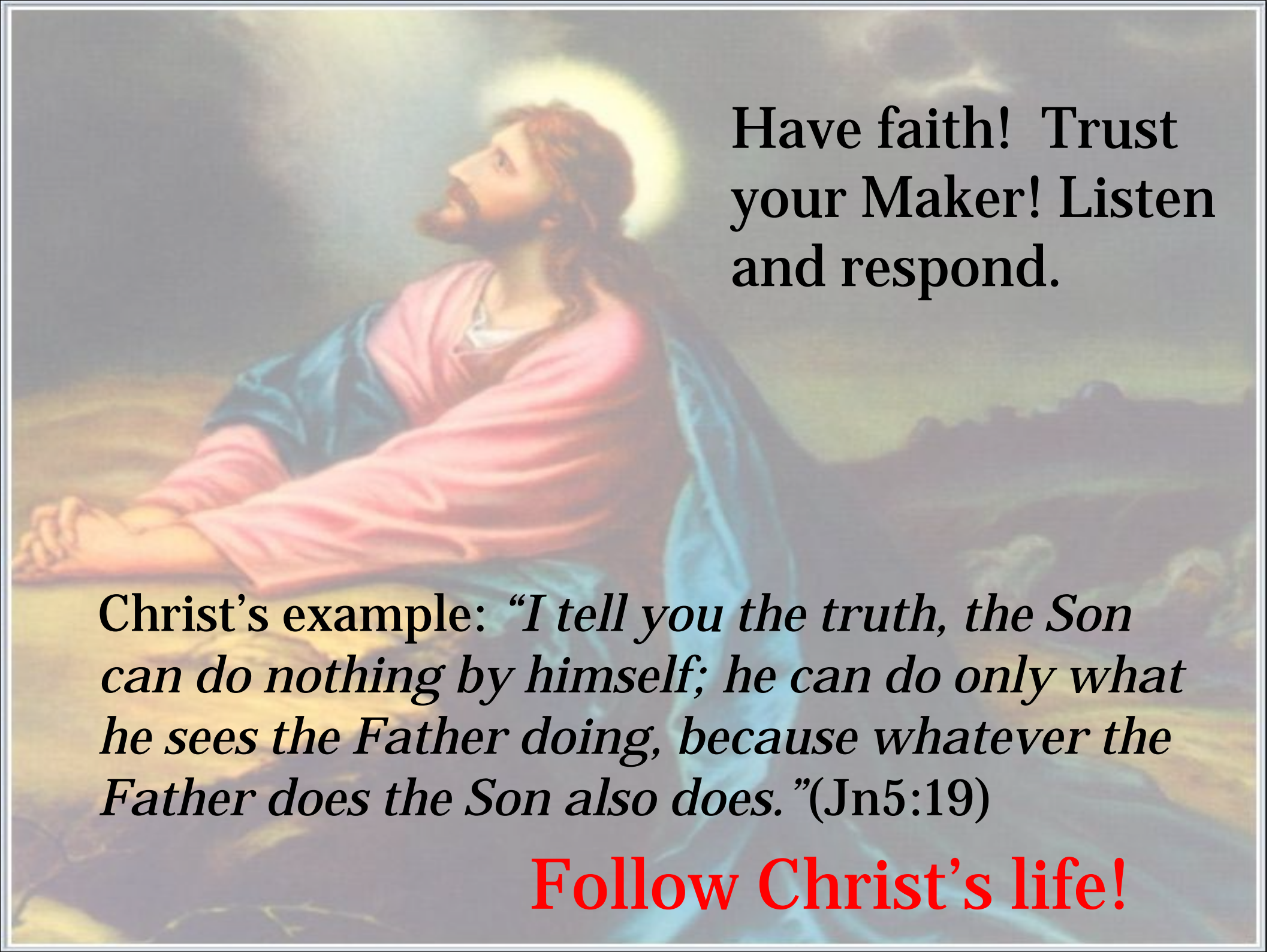
“Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.”

# Discernment

- ◆ To know and live the will of God is a journey of a lifetime. Discernment never stops. It's a walk with Jesus in the life of the Spirit all our life.
- ◆ Discernment begins with trust and recognition of who you are before God and who God is. To be in relationship with Him as you would a friend or with family.

**“Take God for your spouse and friend and walk with him continually, and you will not sin and will learn to love, and the things you must do will work out prosperously for you.”**

**- John of the Cross**



Have faith! Trust  
your Maker! Listen  
and respond.

Christ's example: *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."*(Jn5:19)

**Follow Christ's life!**



# Trust



- Like a child led by the hand  
of a mother, so your God  
shall lead you.

“O Lord, you have  
searched me and  
know me!...you knit  
me together in my  
mother’s womb...”

Psalm 139

Of course our Maker  
knows us, loves us, and  
gave us desires on our hearts!  
Don’t you think he knows what is  
best for us and wants to fulfill our desires?

# Detachment



“I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

# Detachment

- This takes surrender, detachment to all things of the material world, and an indifference to wherever God leads. Surrender control to God.
- Detachment is a freedom from passions and attachments...placing them and all desires of the heart at the Lord's feet and trusting he will give you what is best.



# Spiritual Consolation

“...the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”

Galatians 5:22-23



# Spiritual Consolation



In moments called consolation, you will experience these movements by the Holy Spirit that give you a great desire to know, to love, and to serve God and all of his creation in Him.

- Increase in the virtues of faith, hope, and love.
- You will feel most yourself...alive.



# Why Desolation comes?

- Through our own lack of virtue and giving in to sinful actions and ways.
- Test and growth in faith and deeper relation with God.

“These have come so that your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

1 Peter 1:7



God allows this so we may come to know ourselves more. He may help us understand ourselves through these trials.



Example: Mother Teresa - Dark night of the Soul

“Desolation is a file, and the endurance of darkness is preparation for great light.” -John of the Cross

# Be Attentive, Practice, Learn

Ups and downs will come. Walk when you are in consolation and stay still, pray, grow in God, while in desolation and in consolation.

*“The light is with you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of the light.” John 12:35-36*

Do not allow fear to lead you; God doesn't lead by fear but by love and peace. God wills to work through freedom. The Devil wills to work through fear.

# Discern Spirits and Learn Patterns

Learn to find a consistency in how God speaks to you and how the devil tries to trick you. **“The sheep hear his voice...and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” (Jn 10:3-4)**

Big decision to make? State of Life Vocation?  
Buying a house? -Then God will continue to give you peace and consolation in a decision, although doubts may come.





# Act and Follow God

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The more you learn to follow, the better you will be at endurance in times of trial.



“Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring.”

-St Catherine of Siena

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When it comes to making a decision on a permanent State of Life vocation to Marriage, Religious Life, Priesthood, or Consecrated Life, and you feel called one way - *start living/walking that way whole-heartedly* unless or until God clearly directs you otherwise.

“Come and follow me” says Jesus. Have faith and trust!



Don't focus on the steepness of the mountain!  
Never despair!

# Prayer: Examination of Conscience

- ✓ Examine your day and what you felt. When did you feel it? Try understanding what made you feel a certain way and why.
- ✓ When it comes to making a decision in life, think of the thoughts, feelings, emotions that you experience when making a decision. What do you feel? And why? Follow movements of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ How can you tell when you've made the wrong choice about something? What does that feel like? Are you learning and growing to avoid wrong choices?

Think of a situation recently- or your day.



# Practical Tips:

1. Make pro and con lists of the different vocations. List the greatest desires of your heart from greatest to least. What truly attracts you and gives you great joy?

2. Make a timeline of your life with significant events and people who are a part of your life. What might God be saying to you, or leading you to by way of the path that you've been walking.

3. Practice explaining to a friend why you feel called to a particular vocation (helps to affirm a call).



4. Always keep in mind the end of what you are made for- “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” How are you most fit to live for the kingdom here on earth? Through what vocation?

5. Make a list of vices that you need to work on to be more in-tune to hearing and following the will of God. Learn to reject the bad and follow the good.

# Practical Tips:

6. Read/Meditate on Scripture daily!  
Grow in the life of Jesus (learn Lectio Divina)

7. Participate in the Sacraments as much as possible: Reconciliation, and the Eucharist.

8. Silence, prayer, time spent with God.

9. Spiritual reading and growing in the life of the Saints

10. Get to know people in different vocations why they feel called to the one they are living.



11. Examination of Conscience a few times a day. See how God was present and moving you and how you responded or didn't respond.

12. Spiritual direction-mentors.



## Practical Tips:

13. Where do you enter your relationship with God best? Walks in nature, in a silent chapel or room, listening to music...

14. Go on retreats!

15. Journal your journey, thoughts, prayers, joys and struggles. See where God is leading you in your life.

16. Serve people, volunteer in the Church or in the soup kitchen, etc





## Luke 1:26-31,34-35,38

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus...

...But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” And the angel said to her in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God...

...Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”



# Pray with Saint Ignatius

A prayer of great faith and trust in God

***Suscipe (St. Ignatius of Loyola):***

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,  
my memory, my understanding and my  
entire will,*

*All I have and call my own.*

*You have given all to me.*

*To you, Lord, I return it.*

*Everything is yours; do with it what you  
will.*

*Give me only your love and your grace.*

*That is enough for me.*

*“...No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God  
has prepared for those who love Him...” I Corinthians 2:9*





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**“Holiness consists simply in doing God's will, and being just what  
God wants us to be.”**



# Discernment books:

- The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius
- Discerning the Will of God: An Ignatian Guide to Christian Decision Making. By: Fr. Timothy Gallagher, OMV
- Dubay, Thomas S.M. *“...And You Are Christ’s”: The Charism of Virginity and the Celibate Life.*
- Scanlan, Michael T.O.R., Manney James. *What Does God Want? A Practical Guide to Making Decisions.*
- *St Therese: The Story of a Soul*

## **For Priesthood Discernment:**

- Brannen, Fr. Brett A. *To Save a Thousand Souls: A Guide for Discerning a Vocation to Diocesan Priesthood.*

## **For a Scriptural Based Discernment:**

- *Sacred Scripture - Especially focus on the Gospels.*
- Dolan, Archbishop Timothy M. *To Whom Shall We Go? Lessons from the Apostle Peter.*

## **For a Dense, Theology of Discernment:**

- Balthasar, Hans Urs von & McCarthy, Mary Frances. *The Christian State of Life.*
- Bolin, Joseph. *Paths of Love: The Discernment of Vocation.*
- Dubay, Thomas S.M. *Authenticity: A Theology of Discernment*

