

Discernment When There Is No Life Changing Decision To Make

As Christians we use a process of Discernment when we sense a call *to* or *away from* something and we want to know if this is a call from God. It usually begins with a thought or a sense that something needs to happen either because we see a need that is calling us or we have a sense that what we are doing no longer makes sense to us. You may have had other reasons that led you into a discernment process.

But what does this look like once we have begun a ministry and are living it? Or to put it another way: how do we practice the art of discernment in the regular and ordinary days of our ministry?

I think for the most part we believe in the omnipresence of God, ie God is with us always. How conscious of God's presence are we in the ordinary moments of our day? When children are in the house we listen with a third ear, whether we can see them or not we have a sense of where they are and what they are up to! Are we that aware of where God is and what God is up to in the ordinary moments of our days?

Here is an exercise for you that can help you become more aware of God's presence. Each day ask yourself: Where is God in this moment? How did I experience God? (notice the difference between a *thought about* God's presence and an *experience of* God.)

You may begin this by spending a few minutes at the end of each day or at some point through the day. Pick any encounter, moment, or particular place and time in your day. Then reflect on how God was present in that moment. Did you experience the God of Creation, or, the face of Christ in someone you encountered, or perhaps the Holy Spirit enabled you to do something you were not fully conscious you would be able to do on your own.

Re live the moment, write it down, take notes of what you heard, smelled, tasted, touched. Where in your body did you feel this presence; in your gut, shivers down your spine, a sense of expanse, a deep breathe, your hands, feet. Be very specific. Dig deeper to describe the experience. Initially this may be a chore to stop and reflect in this manner, or to journal or draw the experience but the more you do it, the easier it becomes, and you will gradually become more conscious of God's presence in the moment.

You may say I am already aware of God's presence in the moment, great do it anyway. Look for differing signs of God's presence: creator, redeemer, saviour, friend, spirit, communion or even God's absence.

Sometimes we become more aware of presence as we examine absence. Compare moments when you were conscious of God and moments when it may seem as if God was napping or busy elsewhere.

The important piece to this is to get the experience outside of ourselves, thus the journaling, or drawing. When we move the subjective felt experiences from within us and create a more objective perspective, it allows us to go deeper into the experience. When we keep it inside it becomes even more subjective, nebulous and harder to access. Some may think the experience would be diminished because we do not have the words to describe the fullness of it. Baby steps.... The more we practice this art, the easier it gets, the richer the description becomes and the more experiences we will recognize on a daily basis. I encourage you to use your words, simply stated to describe the experience. Do not worry about making a pretty sentence that makes sense, if it comes merely in single words or images put that down. This is not an exercise in having the experience in the language of scripture, prayer book, or liturgy. It is the language of a child in awe when they examine their discovery of a dandelion!!!

As we become more aware of how God's presence is known to us and experienced in the ordinary moments of our lives it will become easier for us recognize the difference between our ego, our needs and God's desire for the world and for us? With recognition comes the ability to surrender and respond to God's desire for us when we are faced with life changing decisions.