

X What does God want?

Prayers for guidance are often loaded in one direction or another. For example, we will do what God wants so long as we don't have to move house. The important thing about good discernment is that we come at it from a place of balance.

A word Ignatius uses is indifference which is not the same as apathy, or being indifferent to injustice. More is it a sense of being open to all possibilities so that God can draw us to where he wants us. This is remarkably like the covenant service, 'put me to what you will.....'. We can only be where God wants us if we are truly indifferent. For Ignatius, indifference is like a 'balance at equilibrium, without leaning to one side or the other'. It is about cultivating a sense of poise so that we are ready to go in the direction God indicates.

Occasionally a decision comes 'out of the blue'. We have been 'zapped'. A more familiar way of discernment is to list the advantages and disadvantages of a particular choice. However, it is not simply a question of the longest list which determines the outcome. One advantage may outweigh more than one disadvantage.

Another method is by using the imagination. Imagine telling someone you have never known what you have chosen for the greater glory of God. Or, imagine you are on your death bed. Would you have made the same choice? Finally, imagine you are standing before your judge on the last day and reflect on the decision you would like to have made.

After any process of discernment and a decision made it is good to pray for confirmation. This usually comes via an affective experience of consolation - a sense of joy, peace and direction. Of course, feelings of peace do not necessarily imply that the decision taken is easy! My call into ministry was never easy but it was the right decision and I have never regretted it.

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