

FOUNDATION & CONTEXT FOR DISCERNMENT

I. Discernment is Relational

- Christian discernment is about *seeking God's will* and *to respond to the invitation* to follow Christ in discipleship.
- Discernment is fundamentally rooted in our relationship with God.
 1. God chooses to reveals God's self to us
 2. We are capable of experiencing, understanding and responding to the invitation to follow God.
- Jesus is the model *par excellence* for Christian discernment.

II. Prayer: The Context for Discernment

- **Listening:** Discernment must take place in deep and intense prayer.
- **The Religious Experience:** The encounter with grace leads us to a deeper awareness of God's presence, love and graciousness. Grace transforms our mind and heart, moving our imagination (i.e., our desire, affects, memories, will, convictions) to a deeper level of awareness in our relationship with God.
- **Discerning Heart:** Prayer becomes very conscious and intentional where we need to be aware of God's presence and to discern the interior movements of grace within us. We come to a deep sensitivity and a keen awareness of how we are being moved and influenced by the working of the spirits (*consolation and desolation*).

III. Orientation: A Particular Way of Being

- **A way of being that is in touch with and attune to God.** An orientation that reveals a fundamental desire to respond to God's initiative and invitation.
- Our self-identity as Christians is illuminated by our **heart-felt knowledge** of God – an intimate, personal experience of God revealed in and through Christ.
- 3 important elements in a **proper Orientation of Self:**
 1. **Openness to God:** A desire of surrendering and being receptive of God's grace – an attitude of listening, willingness, attentiveness, letting go of control
 2. **Continual Reflection:** Notice the interior movements and understand how they affect us. This process includes data gathering, understanding, reasoning, then bringing them to prayer.
 3. **Response-ability to recognize and respond** to the invitation: A growing capacity in choices, freedom, decision, action, and commitment.