

Meditations on Discernment

Introduction

The purpose of this weekend is to discern God's Will for your life. By this point in your life, you have already made some big decisions: the college you attended, the major you studied, the people you dated or did not date. You may not, however, have made these decisions explicitly asking the question whether they were God's Will for you. Some aspects of God's Will are easy to know because He has revealed it to the Church. We know the moral law and the truth about God's plan of salvation. But when it comes to the particular decisions of our lives, finding the answer requires a bit more work on our part. God usually does not write us letters telling us explicitly what we should do.

"Discernment" is the process by which we distinguish what will lead us most effectively toward God from what will delay that journey. It is a habit that takes much prayer, experience, and grace to develop. We may not feel up to the task. But life is before us, and permanent delay is not an option. Therefore, we approach the Father and ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to direct us down the path where Christ awaits us. The meditations and talks of this weekend are meant to provide assistance in making these important decisions in the light of Christ so that we all may arrive at our final goal, eternal happiness as the Holy People of God in heaven.

Purpose Meditation

During this prayer period, you will meditate upon your purpose in life. We will best discern God's Will when we are clear about our goal. Each of us has been created by God; therefore, we share a divine calling in the world. Meditate upon what Sacred Scripture says regarding the purpose of human life. The following instructions will help you enter into prayer more effectively.

1. Take a moment to imagine God the Father looking down upon you as you begin this prayer. Call to mind the Father's approval that you are willing to give Him this time in prayer.
2. Say a short prayer asking for the grace of the Holy Spirit that all your thoughts and intentions may be directed to God's greater glory.
3. Ask for the grace that you might be given insight into the purpose He has placed within your heart.
4. Now take time to meditate upon these passages, *not feeling the need to get through every passage*, but stopping where a line or image moves your heart. As something strikes your heart, allow it to become a moment to dialogue with God, turning your inspirations into a prayer.

In love He predestined Us

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Eph 1:3-6

The Greatest Commandment

"Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?" Jesus said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbor as yourself."

Mt 22:35-39

A Spirit of Power and Love and Self-Control

Hence, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control. Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling.

2 Tm 1:6-9a

Led by the Spirit of God

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

Rom 8:14-17

The Vine and the Branches

I am the vine,
You are the branches.
Whoever remains in me, with me in him,
Bears fruit in plenty;
For cut off from me you can do nothing....
It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit,
And then you will be my disciples.
As the Father has loved me,
So I have loved you.
Remain in my love.

Jn 15: 5-6; 8-9

5. Take time in silence to allow God to speak to you through the words you have received. How do you understand God’s purpose for your life?
6. End with an Our Father and then write down the ideas, images, and internal movements that stuck out to you during prayer.

Trust Meditation

This meditation asks you to focus upon your trust in God.

1. Begin by calling to mind how the Father looks down upon you praying with favor. Enter into prayer with a “taste for victory,” knowing that the Holy Spirit prays within you.
2. Ask for the grace of the Holy Spirit that all your thoughts be directed to the glory of God.
3. Ask for the specific grace of growing in your trust of Jesus.
4. Pray through the following:

The Box

Imagine that you have received a message from Jesus Himself that he desires to meet with you to discuss a matter of great importance. You are to meet him at a designated time and location.

Imagine the location of your meeting and Jesus there waiting for you. As you approach, he invites you to sit down near him. Once you have settled yourself, he begins to address you. He points to a box sitting at his side and says, “I have brought this for you. It is my present for you. Inside you will find my plans for your life. It is entirely a gift, and you are free to accept it or reject it. I will not abandon you if you decline to accept it. You are free to open it or close it. The one thing you may not do is look inside before choosing.”

What do you do?

Take time to imagine yourself in this scene and pay attention to your reactions. This meditation is not asking you to determine whether Jesus desires you to be a missionary, a religious, a parent, a student, a doctor, etc. It simply asks whether you trust that whatever it may be to which Jesus calls you, it will be for your good, for your salvation. Take time to consider these points before God.

Scripture

Having prayed with this scenario, choose whatever Scripture speaks to your heart. Meditate upon the passage and speak to the Lord, asking His guidance and expressing your desires.

My Plan for You

I know the plans I have in mind for you—thus says the Lord—plans for peace, not disaster, reserving a future full of hope for you. Then when you call to me, and come to plead with me, I will listen to you. When you seek me you shall find me, when you seek me with all your heart; I will let you find me.

Jer 29:11-14

All Works for the Good

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he knew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, and those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us?

Rom 8:28-31

Seek First God's Kingdom

And Jesus said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all this glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his Kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well.

Lk 12:22-31

5. End your prayer with an Our Father and write down any movements that occurred within you during prayer.

Making a Decision in Peace

As an earlier talk explained, God gave us the use of reason so that we can make informed judgements regarding our lives. We do not and should not have to wait for a lightning bolt from the sky in order to make every decision. With this in mind, read through the following two methods of making a decision given by St. Ignatius of Loyola, and choose whichever seems most in line with your personality. Enter into this prayer time with peace and confidence in God's direction.

Reasoning through Advantages and Disadvantages

1. Imagine God the Father looking down upon you with favor as you enter into prayer.
2. Say a short prayer asking for the grace of the Holy Spirit to help direct your thoughts.
3. Call to mind the purpose for which you were created, namely, to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and therefore to save your soul. Recall any insights or graces from the earlier prayer period on Purpose.
4. Call to mind any attachments that cloud your decisions. What are the worldly goods that cloud your vision from seeing God clearly? Ask for grace to see through these distractions and focus upon God clearly.

5. Beg God to move your will and put into your mind what you ought to do. Beg that you may reason well and faithfully, and choose what is most according to His Holy Will.
6. For each of the options available for you to choose, make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of each, evaluating each according to what will help you achieve the purpose for which you were created.
7. Having assembled a list, see which one produces a greater movement within your intellect, not paying as much heed to the movements of your immediate emotions.
8. When a preliminary decision has been made, offer it to the Lord to see whether God will receive that decision and find it acceptable.
9. End with an Our Father, writing down any major movements that happened within you.

Meditation upon the Love of God

1. Imagine God the Father looking down upon you with favor as you enter into prayer.
2. Say a short prayer asking for the grace of the Holy Spirit to help direct your thoughts.
3. Call to mind the purpose for which you were created, namely, to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and therefore to save your soul. Recall any insights or graces from the earlier prayer period on Purpose.
4. Call to mind God's love and when you have experienced it most profoundly. Note that God's love comes first, and our love is a response. Since love is the meaning of our lives, we desire to make a decision based solely as a response to the love of Christ.
5. Now imagine a person for whom you desire every good in the world, most especially the good of living a holy life. In dialogue with the Lord, how would you advise this person to act if his or her circumstances were the same as yours?
6. Imagine yourself at the hour of death, looking back upon the life that you had led. How would you have wanted your life to proceed, given that we only have one life to live?
7. Imagine yourself before God the Father at your judgement. How would you have wanted to choose, standing before the all-loving and all-just God?
8. Having imagined these scenarios, make a decision, and place it before God in all humility. Ask if the Lord finds your decision acceptable.
9. End with an Our Father and write down any important movements within your soul.

After the Weekend

These meditations are yours to use at any point in your life. Directly after the Recruitment Weekend, allow the Lord to continue to speak to you and provide Him the space to reveal His Will to you. Return to the meditation through which the Lord's voice was strongest and allow Him to continue to speak. Jesus is asking you to say yes, no matter what the result of this weekend is. Do not be afraid!