

Discernment Summary

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Discernment of Spirits

is variously known as

- discovering God's will in our lives
- learning to read the body's signals
- "the place where prayer and action meet" (Thomas Green SJ)
- "a way of sifting through our desires and passions, so that our lives may be shaped by the best of them" (David Lonsdale, SJ)
- sorting out these movements to see
 - which are from God (or another source)
 - which lead to God (or elsewhere)

* it is a science (the rules) and an art (techniques to practice and refine)

* it is not about choosing between good and evil (a matter of conscience) but about choosing between two goods – which one is the *better* choice *for you, now?*

Levels of Discernment

- 1 Discerning the Day
- 2 Discerning for Decision-Making
- 3 Communal Discernment

"Good Spirit" – "Evil Spirit"

"The Good Spirit" (comes from/ leads to God) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• God• Holy Spirit• messenger of God ("angel")	"The Evil / Bad / False Spirit or Voice" (not from God; leads away from God) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the Enemy of our progress, the Devil• forces working against God• evil structures in society ("structural sin")• shadow/dark side of our nature• our base/selfish side• our own subtle ways of deceiving/disturbing ourselves
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Effects

The Good Spirit leads to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• integration of our feelings• increase of faith, hope and love• deepened sense of presence to ourselves, to God, to others• greater Peace• consolation	The Evil Spirit/False Voice leads to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• anxiety• a divided heart• divided attention• lack of presence• turmoil, disintegration• desolation
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What **Indifference** does and doesn't mean.

St Ignatius' Discernment times

- 1 Revelation time
- 2 Reasoning Time
 - the logical
(fourfold analysis for two options)
 - the imaginative
(advising another; deathbed review; Judgement scene)
- 3 Discerning feelings
(strive for indifference; live out the options imaginatively; test the spirits; pray; apply the (rules”)

Some Rules for Discernment

- 1 Dreams and desires that reoccur frequently, and tend not to lose their appeal or engagement, should be taken seriously.
- 2 Never go back on a decision made properly in time of consolation (or make a new decision) in time of desolation – this is the worst time to change.
- 3 Beware of false consolations. A choice which looks good and enriching may be a false spirit in disguise. Always check where the choices are leading.
- 4 False voices often work on us at our weakest points.
- 5 Don't feed the bad spirit.
- 6 The good can be the enemy of the better.
- 7 Ask yourself, “What are the ‘angels’ saying?”

The Process

- 1 Give yourself some regular quiet space.
- 2 Gather all the data you need.
- 3 Get in touch with your deepest dreams and desires.
- 4 Listen, notice, be aware.
- 5 Strive to be indifferent to the outcome, to be free and detached.
- 6 Imagine yourself in the scenario of each option. Reflect.
- 7 Make a tentative decision. Give God one more chance to help make your choice.
- 8 Over time, go through the process again, testing the choice. Just a check you haven't rushed things.

Confirmation of the Choice

Does it continue to feel the right choice, over time?

