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Hearing Impaired?... Discerning God's Will

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Discernment. This word invokes much thought. *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines discernment as "the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure" or "an act of discerning." Turning then to discerning, the dictionary defines this word as "showing insight and understanding." What does discernment mean, then, in relation to one's life? Looking at discernment within the context of Christian spirituality, one can better grasp the concept of discernment in relation to one's life."

Hearing Impaired? . . . Discerning God's Will

Discernment. This word invokes much thought. *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines discernment as "the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure" or "an act of discerning." Turning then to discerning, the dictionary defines this word as "showing insight and understanding." What does discernment mean, then, in relation to one's life? Looking at discernment within the context of Christian spirituality, one can better grasp the concept of discernment in relation to one's life.

First, let us look at God's call in one's life. We often hear folks refer to the Sacrament of Baptism as the point of one's initial call from God. We grant this to be an accurate statement; yet Karl Rahner talks about being born with Grace—a free gift given by God. Thus, one could argue that we are called from birth to listen to God's word. We are called to an everlasting relationship of deepening love with God.

Second, God may be calling, but is there anyone listening? Discernment means to listen, truly listen to God moving, speaking, and flowing within us, others around us, and throughout our entire life. On a personal note, this is the part of discernment that I struggle to comprehend. This is where I fault the dictionary in its definition. How can I obtain discernment when I cannot fully comprehend how to discern? How do we learn to discern? How do we identify and validate that God is truly calling us to action or to determine which action to choose? This takes much practice beyond my years and experience; yet I believe that I am slowly developing a way of discerning about discerning.

Finally, knowing that God is fully present in my life, I continue to look for signs of God's will. Perhaps God is speaking through a loved one or an emotional reaction my body experiences. This may seem obvious and clear; yet discernment can be a murky cloud looming over one's head. Continually, I find God everywhere, without ever fully understanding God. God is here, but God is more than here. Therefore, I need to listen to and respond to what I think and feel God is calling me to do. For example, since graduating from St. John Fisher, I have been working as a youth minister for a local parish, attending courses for my Masters degree in Theology at St. Bernard Institute in Rochester, and live a relatively normal life. (What is normal anyway?) During this time, I have honed my God-given gift of teaching. This is one aspect of my job and personal life that I seem to strive at and enjoy. Therefore, I understand God is calling me to teach. Here's the catch: teach what, whom, and how? Am I supposed to remain in my position and teach about the Catholic faith? Or am I supposed to become a college professor or grad school teacher? The questions continue.

Even though I do not fully have the answers to my questions of how to apply my gift of teaching, I do know that the importance of discernment is to help me recognize

my call from God and use it. Perhaps the how will be more defined in years and experiences to come. For now, I will remain as I am, discerning about discernment, teaching however and wherever I can, and listening for God's whisper reverberating the drum of my ear.

Jodi Rowland Schott