

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Nov 12th 2015

One of the greatest gifts I have received as a result of my being part of the Creighton community is an ongoing and deepening understanding of the process of discernment as a part of my daily life. The discernment of spirits was an essential element of the way of proceeding that Saint Ignatius described to the initial members of the Society of Jesus and that we model in our lives today. In a form of shorthand, discernment requires that we engage our emotions, mind and spirit to listen to the movements of the Holy Spirit in us and to select a path that brings us closer to God (consolation) and away from the evil one (desolation).

In practice however it is far more nuanced and complex. We are often deciding about 2 options that are both positive and in essence making a judgment about what is “best”. Just as likely however are situations where we are challenged to discern between less than optimal options and decide what is “least bad”. In either case our intellect and emotions intersect with our spirit in what can be a difficult and draining process.

When confronted with challenging decisions we often pray for wisdom to inform our discernment. Today’s first reading from the Book of Wisdom informs us about the characteristics of what wisdom might look and feel like. In the midst of what can be emotional upheaval in discernment these clues about wisdom may act as a beacon for our efforts.

Wisdom is “subtle, agile, clear unstained and certain”. Just as we seek the peace of the Holy Spirit in our quest for consolation, in this process we might identify how we are thinking and feeling about discernment with an eye towards seeing the characteristics of a wise heart, mind and spirit. Wisdom “loves the good” and is “beneficent and kindly”. Wisdom “pervades all things by reason of her purity”. Finally Wisdom is “an aura of the might of God”. These are powerful words and images that can be clues to reflect upon in a process of discernment. They may be yet another guidepost to the God given gifts of our intellect and emotions to better serve God’s kingdom.

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