

Day 2. 06.17.2022 (Friday)

**TOPIC: Discernment**

**Sessions 1 and 2.**

**Aspects of the discernment of the spirits. The Process of Community Discernment - Fr. James Grummer, S.J.**

*Jesuit, ordained in 1982 in the USA, director of the Ignatian Center for Spirituality in Rome*

The synodal path is a path of common discernment and dialogue. We participate in it together, together we fulfill the mission.

**How to learn the discernment?**

**Discernment** is the prayerful process of seeking God's will to grow in freedom and following Christ. It is a prayerful process that involves "wasting" time with God. This is not about an efficient process that brings immediate results. It is about being with God, sitting with Him, walking with Him. Seeking God's will does not mean that God has a precise plan for us and we are to discover it. He is freedom. God dwells in us and at the same time, we are sinners. We do not always listen to what God says; sometimes we listen more carefully to what the world says. Discernment is being aware of these two voices: God and the world, Satan. The second one says that I am what I have, what I possess, the more talents I have, the better I am. The Gospel says that man's first temptation is wealth. The second is honors, we want others to think well of us, to experience priority, honors, for example; I can board the plane first, I am V.I.P. The third temptation is pride – I want to be the first on the plane, I get nervous when they stop me at the entrance.

Jesus wants us to be like HIM. We are material, there is a void in us that needs to be filled. Instead of wealth we have poverty, instead of honor we have contempt. We are dying, we are mortal, and Jesus Himself entered into this experience of mortality.

Discernment is the recognition of the voice that tempts and the voice of Jesus, who wants to show us how we can be instruments of God in the world. In the process of discernment, therefore, we need freedom "from" and freedom "to". **Free from** the chains that bind me, from my limitations, from my thoughts that I will not succeed and from the fact that I can do anything. Jesus is able to free us from this, from our limitations, but also from the fantasy of my abilities. **Freedom to** who we truly are, that is, daughters and sons of God. To be oneself, to be the presence of Christ in the world, the temple of the Holy Spirit in the world.

Discernment is to have it all in your head, it often means dying to yourself, just as Jesus died. This is often painful. Discernment is doing something concrete, which sometimes requires difficult, sacrificial acts, it requires the sacrifice of something of oneself.

**Discernment of different spirits**

Everything that is created is a gift of God. It was created to contribute to our salvation, to help us praise and serve God. We must learn how to use the things in the world that would lead us to God and not to the world, such as telephones. Some things are good for others, not necessarily for me. We need to learn Jesus' strategy, that is, how to use things to be good for us, how to make good choices. Thus poverty rather than wealth, contempt rather than honor, and humility rather than pride.

St. Ignatius distinguishes two basic states: consolation and distress.

**Consolation** leads us to God. It is a state that allows us to discover ourselves better, allows us to grow in faith, hope and love, gives peace, consolation. It brings tears and sorrow for sins. Love for things is only an expression of God's love. Consolation is a perceptible experience of God's love that builds up in us the life of Christ.

**Distress** is a state of darkness, abandonment, dryness, dullness of the soul, inner restlessness, impulsiveness towards the low or earthly. It is a feeling of dissonance that undermines the life of Christ in us.

For Saint Ignatius, discernment is the discovery of the awareness of these states of consolation and distress, it is the understanding of the workings of the spirits that lead us to these states.

A good spirit, giving comfort, wants us to grow, and a bad spirit wants us to diminish, even sometimes prompting us to do too much good things. If the beginning, middle and end are good and tend towards what is good, it is the sign of the angel of light. If the course of the thought ends with something bad, distracting, or less good than originally proposed; if it weakens, disrupts, worries, deprives the former peace, serenity and silence, it comes from the enemy. We are sometimes tempted to do good things too much than we are able to do in a day. A distinction must be made between a good idea that leads to the light and a good idea that does not lead to the good in its entirety, e.g., the temptation to pursue too much for a good cause (perfectionism) or unawareness of one's limitations lead to the wrong fruit.

### **Conditions necessary for Community discernment**

1. **Faith**, that is, the conviction that God wants to bless the process of our communal discernment in a given matter. Faith that He wants to speak through everyone, through a group.
2. **Freedom** (Ignatian's indifference and exclusion from dealing with other matters):
  - **from** fear, doubt, prejudice, hidden goals, the need to convince others that my truth is a better truth, from being at the center of the universe, from following rules, from lack of discipline, from treating others objectively, fantasies, constantly acting, repeating mistakes;
  - **to** see beauty, goodness, to use imagination, to seek God, not oneself, to listen to the Holy Spirit, to oneself, to others; to speak honestly, attentively, to be objective, to be open.
3. **Generosity**/generosity expressed in readiness to pray, to toil, to disregard the costs, to give our talents, to want good, to subordinate personal preferences to the good of the group.
4. **Communion** - in which we trust ourselves that we are on the same side. We are a group, we have different perspectives, so let us see that there is another world, let us discover different perspectives, views.
5. **Time** - for personal and community prayer, for speaking, listening, silence.
6. **Knowledge** – how to discern spirits, how to talk to each other (not how to speak!), how to listen. It is also necessary to establish all the common information on the matter to be discerned.

Going into the process of discernment, you have to have a specific view, of course I can change it, but I have to have a position of mine. It is important to determine who is making the final decision and how it will be made. Ultimately, everyone is obliged to accept the results of this discernment, even if he does not agree with them in their entirety.

### **The process of Community discernment**

The process of Community discernment consists of three parts:

#### **1. Preliminary preparation**

To begin with, all possible information should be collected, disseminated, clarified so that each of the persons involved in community discernment has access to the same information. Then it is necessary to clearly formulate the purpose of discernment. The objective must be a real, important, concrete, feasible action to which the participants undertake. It must be formulated in a clear and simple way, stating *who, what, how, when, how often and for how long* it will do.

It is important that everyone can personally pray, reflect and make a personal decision on this issue. It can take a day or longer.

## 2. Process

- *Introductory prayer* for light and God's presence.
- *A statement about a problem* without discussion or debate (statement of flaws, questions, doubts; everyone must speak out, even to confirm compliance with others).
- *Prayer* over what has been said (what is the Lord saying to me, to us? Are there any fears, lack of freedom after this prayer).
- *Statement of advantages* (pros, advantages, reasons that encourage you to take on this task).
- *Verify that there is consensus*. If we have consent - we put the decision into practice.
- *Prayer over what has happened so far* – what we have peace in, what encourages us. Again, it is necessary that all discerners have their say.
- *Community evaluation and discovery of God's will*. If there is no unanimity – we look for where we are, what are the "pros and cons", what we are against, how to minimize the minuses, strengthen the pros. You can then make a proposal for a smaller group to make a decision or leave it to your supervisor. Sometimes it is necessary to revise the original proposal in order to reach an agreement. It is also possible to adopt a solution by a majority vote, if we agree that the result of the vote will be obligatory.
- *Prayer of thanksgiving*.

3. **Confirmation** (determination of the deadline for the implementation of the decision and the method of assessing the results of the discernment).

## Session 3.

**How did the Servant of God Sister Małgorzata Banaś experience the Nazareth charism? - Sr. Barbara Gromada**

The Holy Father included Sr. Małgorzata Banaś, the Servant of God, among the few righteous in the history of Sodom and Gomorrah, for whom Abraham interceded.

Sister Małgorzata is a simple but extraordinary person. She left behind very little written information (letters from 1968 and 1964, a few sheets and testimonies of people who knew her). She came from Wadowice and worked for a year in a hospital. She worked in Kraków, Lviv, Stryj, mainly performed physical work. In 1926, at the age of 30, she made her perpetual vows in Grodno and adopted the predicate *From the Heart of the Dying Lord Jesus in Gethsemane*. This mystery was fulfilled exactly in her life. God speaks to us through desires.

Sister Małgorzata was transferred from Warsaw to Nowogródek, to the community of Christ the King. For the first few months she had an internal struggle to stay in this place, she was very eager to accept God's will.

This stay in Nowogródek during World War II was for Sister Małgorzata a very difficult time: leaving the religious house, Soviet occupation, working every day in the city hospital from 8.00 am to 5.00 pm as a wound care nurse in the surgical ward.

At the turn of July and August 1943, Gethsemane begins for her, and then a slow agony for almost 20 years. When the Sisters were summoned to the Gestapo post on July 31, Sister Stella, the Superior of the house, asked sr. Małgorzata to stay home, to take care of the parish church and the house. She knew that Małgorzata was strong and would be able to cope if something happened.

You can imagine what Sister Małgorzata was going through, when the Sisters did not return home, unsuccessfully waiting for their return. When the truth came out, there was uncertainty, fear, loneliness, a sense of abandonment. Sister Małgorzata, who in her intention was also ready to give her life like the sisters, wrestled in herself, seeking to understand her situation. "God left me to guard the parish church" - in this she saw God's action. He was the one who directed the whole situation with His intention. This teaches us that behind every event in life there is the Lord God, He has His intention.

From mid-August 1943 she was left alone in Nowogródek. Twice she was in danger of death, once she was even taken to the forest, but she managed to escape. The Germans were looking for the 12<sup>th</sup> nun outside the hospital, but she also managed to disappear and never returned to work in the hospital. In February 1944, when the Soviets occupied Nowogródek, she went to Lithuania, asking for the Sisters to be sent to Nowogródek. The community was reactivated, three sisters and Fr. Zienkiewicz arrived.

After the war, Sister Małgorzata decided to stay in Nowogródek. It must be remembered that at that time the Church found herself in the heat of persecution, the aim of which was first to limit and then destroy her activity. Repression affected 80% of priests, and the teaching of religion to children and young people was banned. There was a total secularization. The authorities took away the house where Sister Małgorzata lived. She rented a room near the parish church, and finally lived in the sacristy, with the help of people adapting it to such conditions. They were, after all, extreme.

Sister Małgorzata had no sources of income, she raised goats, cultivated a garden, rented herself to work for people. In Nowogródek and in 26 surrounding villages, about 600 believers remained within a radius of several kilometers. Małgorzata had no contact with the Congregation, she could only count on herself and on God. Even in 1957, the Sisters did not know what was happening to Małgorzata. For the authorities she was an ordinary citizen, for the people a real nun, although she lived alone and walked dressed in a secular way.

The threat to life increased with the worsening of a political situation, there were attacks of hooligans on the church. Sister Małgorzata had many friends, but also enemies: "One must be ready for life and death, and even for rest somewhere far away (read: exile)". She said that she would not leave Nowogródek until the Sisters came or there was a clear order from the Mother General.

Preserving the parish church as a living center of worship was very difficult, and at the same time it became the goal of Sister Małgorzata. A church committee was formed, registered by the authorities, in which Sister Małgorzata was hired as a housekeeper in the church. There were lay people in the committee who tried to get the priest to come. At all costs, not wanting to allow the closure of the church, they invited a priest from the neighboring parish, but they got permission for his arrival only two times a year.

The faithful arrived long before the priest's arrival from a distance of several kilometers. Merit of Sister Małgorzata was the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the parish church all the time despite the absence of the priest, she brought the Blessed Sacrament from neighboring parishes. She was called the "guardian of the tabernacle." If she had not been in the parish church, others would not have been able to come to church. After 10 years, it was possible to get the priest permanently to Nowogródek.

Sister Małgorzata Banaś was characterized by love for people and they repaid with trust. She understood her vocation that a nun must give people God. First of all, she fought for the family, reconciled feuding marriages. She advised how to resolve conflicts, gathered in prayer, helped organize the wedding, even helped to organize the wedding outfit. She was preparing for baptism, she was even the godmother of little Helenka, for which she was accused of stealing a child to baptize it. She cared for children, young people, for every human being, helping them to survive difficult times.