

# DISCERNMENT IN COMMON - REFLECTION



I ask for what I  
desire as we begin  
this topic



I pray that my entire  
being become open  
to God's grace



I imagine these texts  
being addressed to me,  
and note my response

**Grace: To ask not only what we should do, but seeking to understand how God invites us – and so many people of good will – to share in that great work**

We are not the first to seek clarity concerning God's call. The meeting of the First Companions in Venice is a powerful image, an important step in the formation of the Society. There, the companions confronted the frustration of their plans to go to the Holy Land. This drove them to a deeper discernment of the Lord's call. Where was the Spirit drawing them? As they discerned new direction for their lives, they held fast to what they had already found to be life-giving: sharing their lives together as friends in the Lord; living very close to the lives of the poor; and preaching the Gospel with joy. They were priests, both learned and poor. For the First Companions, life and mission, rooted in a discerning community, were profoundly inter-related. We [...] are called to live in the same way [...]. As we reflect and pray on each of these elements, we do so knowing the intimate unity of mission, life, and discerning community, all afire with the love of Christ.

GC36 - Decree 1, paragraph 4-5

From the beginning, Christian groups have been trying to discern together. Think of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, at which there was strong disagreement as to whether the gentiles should be admitted to membership of the early Church without obeying the Mosaic Law. Finally a solution was reached which is magnificently termed 'the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us' (Acts 15:28). The great Councils which set the foundations of belief about Jesus Christ were exercises in communal discernment. In reading the history of Vatican Two we can watch a great corporate effort to discern how the Church should proceed in the changing world. We can also see what a struggle it was for 2500 well-intentioned bishops to decide on the 'wisest and most loving' courses of action.

Brian Grogan SJ (Lesson 13) - The Decision of the Holy Spirit and of us

Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:31-33

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are the challenges I need to face before we embark on a process of communal discernment? How can I approach these challenges as a leader?
2. Have I experienced a process of communal discernment before? What worked well and what did not?