

# **HINTS - RULES TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL** **USING OUR NATURAL REASONING POWERS** **UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF GOD'S GRACE**

*(Summarized and adapted from the Book of the Spiritual Exercises  
of St. Ignatius Nos. 169-189, specially 177 & 178)*

## **Ignatian Rules Helpful to Discern God's Will about Important Issues - such as one's Vocation in Life -**

**1st Step:** Ask God for **light** to discern his will and for **generosity and strength** to carry it out.

### **Prayer for Generosity**

Lord

Teach us to be generous,  
Teach us to serve you as you deserve;  
to give and not to count the cost,  
to fight and not to heed the wounds,  
to toil and not to seek for rest,  
to labor and not to ask for any reward  
save that of knowing we do Your will.

**2nd Step:** Write down into two opposite columns the “**pros**” & “**cons**”, namely, the reasons - *advantages and disadvantages* - you find for your choosing a particular job, career, task, profession or state of life, etc. **you feel** God calls you to, and also the “**pros**” and “**cons**” for not choosing it.

*(Note: The 'pros' and cons' should not be considered in terms of financial, material or worldly gains, but only in terms of the greater service of God and neighbour.)*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Step:** Once you have listed all the “**pros**” and “**cons**” for choosing or not choosing a particular call or vocation, balance one list against the other and see to which side the scales tilt.

**4<sup>th</sup> Step:** Then, dispassionately, consider what would you advice your best friend to do, were he to come to you for advice and showed you the list of the “**pros**” and “**cons**” you have written.

**5<sup>th</sup> Step:** Then imagine for a moment that you are about to die. At that moment of truth, what choice, do you think, would give you greater consolation and joy?

**6<sup>th</sup> Step:** Next, in church or in your room, pray to Jesus over the choice you are likely to make.. What do you think Jesus would feel about your choice?

**7<sup>th</sup> Step:** Finally, make your choice.

### **Final checking:**

**Now, check again the correctness of your choice by going through the  
the three stages hinted below.**

#### **Stage One: Honestly and dispassionately check your Feelings.**

- (1) Offer to God the election you made in the 7 steps above.
- (2) Be attuned to your feelings at this moment and write them down. How do you feel now about your choice?
  - Happy or sad?
  - Reassured or uncertain?
  - Peaceful or anxious?
- (3) Imagine that you had chosen something different from what you did, how would you feel now? Jot down your feelings.
- (4) Finally, if you feel at peace and happy over your choice, in the presence of God, confirm your choice, and offer it to Him.

#### **Stage Two: Honestly and dispassionately check the correctness of your choice with an experienced Spiritual Guide**

- (1) Meet a good spiritual guide and check with him the steps of your election and all wrote while doing your discernment.
- (2) Discuss with him your doubts, if any, and any other points you would like to clarify.
- (3) With his help check the soundness of your choice.
- (4) If he approves your choice go onto stage three.

#### **Stage Three: Alone with God**

- (1) Pray and ask for His blessings.
- (2) Again renew the choice you arrived at during the discernment.
- (3) Offer it to God.
- (4) Prayer

#### **Take and Receive**

O Lord, My Liberty.

Take My Will,

My Mind, My Memory.

Do Thou Direct,

And Govern All And Sway.

Do What Thou Wilt,

Command And I Obey.

:                    Only Thy Grace and Love on Me Bestow,  
Possessing These, All Riches I Forgo.

