



INVITATION TO DISCERNMENT

The Holy Spirit can choose any time, sacred or even seemingly profane, to open our minds and hearts to the inspirations of grace. My introduction to the spiritual world began with an “inspiration” when I was eighteen years old. I saw a commercial for the Peace Corps while watching television late at night. The picture of poor people in Africa stirred in me a tremendous desire to give a year of my life to help them. As the night wore on, the inspiration took on intensity and depth. I decided that rather than serving for a year, I wanted to dedicate my life as a missionary. Nothing like this experience had ever happened to me before.

I never got to sleep that night I was so energized and hopeful. My best attempts to describe it are that it was like falling in love and knowing in an instant precisely what I wanted to do with my life. Although Catholic and a regular Mass attendee, I would not say that I had a real relationship with God or Christ.

Yet that night I experienced a spiritual force outside of myself that left me in awe and I

remember saying to myself: "God is the source of this inspiration." I was overcome with joy. That was fifty years ago in the spring of 1973. It was my invitation from God to awaken spiritually so He could guide my life along the everlasting way.

In the fifty years since my introduction to the spiritual world, I can say that I am still in awe of the power of God and amazed at how much I still have to learn. So, I write to you, dear friend, not as a master of the spiritual life but as one still on the journey. But if you have not yet embarked on the same journey or have for whatever reason stalled in your progress, I would like to extend you an invitation dive in.

This ten-week journey is a simplified and restructured introduction to spiritual discernment for my previous book: *Forty Weeks, An Ignatian Path to Christ with Sacred Story Prayer*. Many have asked for more resources on spiritual discernment and so we decided to do a new course dedicated solely to this very important topic.

Therefore, the goal of the present course is to help you attune the radar of your mind and heart to the spiritual world. You will discover three sources inspiring you: your own unique human nature; God, the creator of human nature; and the force St. Ignatius of Loyola calls "the enemy of human nature."

All three sources of inspiration consciously and/or unconsciously motivate everything you do in your life. Like breathing, you might not be aware you are being inspired, but you are. And like your breathing, God and your enemy are actively inspiring you 24/7 because both want you for eternity—God for eternal life—the enemy of human nature for eternal death. It is a cornerstone of our faith that the God of Light and the lord of darkness are real. That is why we need a roadmap for understanding how the forces of light and darkness work in the context of our own personal history.

God's passion to always help you should inspire hope and consolation. But the relentlessness of the enemy to derail your life should not frighten you. Those whose lives are committed to Christ should trust in him who overcame all darkness. And awakening to the spiritual world will be your key to more consciously cooperating with the inspirations of God and rejecting the inspirations of your enemy.

To help you do this I am inviting you to engage various spiritual exercises in the course of your days. The exercises will have times of quiet, times of prayer, times of physical exercise, times for reflection and journaling, times to turn off technology and open your heart and times to meditate in the evening hours on the Gospel stories of Jesus.

There will be short exercises upon waking and before you go to bed and you will also practice the Ignatian Examen prayer, meditating daily for fifteen minutes on the themes

of Creation, Presence, Memory, Mercy and Eternity. If you are even moderately faithful to the exercises over these ten weeks, what you discover about the spiritual world will enlighten and amaze you.

Enjoy the spiritual exercises. Enjoy the journey. Throw the net of your heart out into deep water of the spiritual world. Your life will never be the same.

Fr. Bill Watson, S.J.

Feast of St. Joseph the Worker



St. Joseph by Pietro Annigoni d. 1988