



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 8: "What is Formation?"
sheet 3

3. Discernment in Vocation

DISCERNING A SECULAR
FRANCISCAN VOCATION



- Discernment is a two-way street [individual + fraternity: must await the leading of the Holy Spirit]



- Discernment is not easy & the path is not straight [all concerned are led by God's Spirit]



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seed sown

formation undertaken

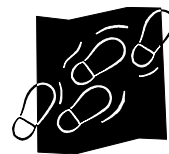
God is at work

desired result [I Cor 3.6]



- But, in discernment prayer is the primary tool

- Discernment is a process



SCRIPTURAL INSIGHTS IN THE TASK OF DISCERNING

Listen for the still small voice:

'...and after the fire a still small voice' [I K 19.12]

Be prepared to be emptied of preconceptions & biases:

'...the rich he has sent empty away' [Lk 1.53]

Discern the source of the call:

'Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy' [I Sam 3.8]

Be prepared to distinguish between God's voice & others:

'...test the spirits to see whether they are of God' [I John 4.1]

Be prepared for times of uncertainty:

'Some in the crowd shouted one thing, some another' [Acts 21.34]

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Be prepared to wait—it may seem slow:

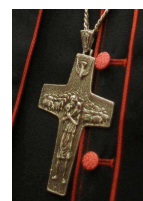
'If it seems slow, wait for it, it will surely come' [Hab 2.3]

Following in the footsteps of
Saint Francis



will lead us to
the crucified
Christ

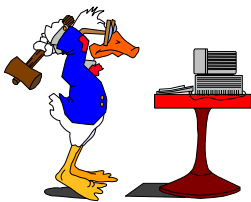
and our life
will be nothing
but his



EACH PERSON UNIQUE EACH CALL UNIQUE

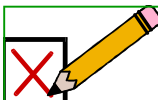
LOOK FOR OBSTACLES

- Individualism & competition
- Self-absorption
- Ambition
- Self-righteousness
- Need for control
- Difficulty with interpersonal relationships



POSITIVE SIGNS IN PROSPECTIVES

- Aware of needs of others
- Shows honourable motives for wishing to enter the Order
- Serenity despite turmoil in life
- Radiates joy
- Open to authentic relationship in fraternity
- Displays persistence & patience despite obstacles & impediments
- Accepted by fraternity; believes belongs there
- Filled with gratitude & love that does not fade with time



LOOK FOR PRIMARY ATTITUDES

1. Trust: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.' [Prov 3.5]

- God is present
- God speaks to us
- God is loving & merciful

2. Listening: 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.' [1 Sam 3.10]

- God speaks through everything
- We must listen with open minds & hearts
- Sometimes it is not what we want to hear

3. Prayer & Waiting: 'Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you...blessed are those who wait for him.' [Isa 30.18]

- Prayer for discernment involves listening with total attention
- God's will is found in everything, so believing this means our whole life becomes a prayer

4. Scriptural Knowledge: 'I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' [Ps 119.11]

- Knowledge of God through Scripture
- Gospels: life to Gospel, Gospel to life

5. Humility: 'For God abases the proud, but saves the lowly.' [Job 22.30]

- Humble person: neither too self confident nor too modest
- Humility—one of the foundation stones of discernment—accepts limits of human knowledge, willing to depend on God & others for help

6. Discipline, Perseverance, Patience, Perspective: 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...' [Gal 5.22f]

- Impulse is controlled by discipline
- Uncertainty mastered by perseverance
- Patience replaces irritation
- Perspective reminds us that it is to God's will that we are responding

NEGATIVE SIGNS IN PROSPECTIVES

- Overextended or exhausted
- Experiences inner turmoil, disturbances, sadness, depression
- Has pressing previous commitments that demand serious consideration, esp children, spouse
- Experiencing anxiety or obsessions; not in touch with God's presence
- Exhibits attitudes of absolute certainty, arrogance, superiority, vanity, irritability, resentment, condemnation, condescension