

Discernment

Sunday May 24th

A week ago I had an incredible opportunity to focus on my Christian faith life. I have had the distinct privilege of taking the time to spend reflecting on my ministry, on my vocation, on my health and my family. In it all I have tried to open myself to see, hear, experience, contemplate where God is in all of this. The journey was filled with many exciting peaks of theological insights as well as some pretty dark and scary valleys of doubt.

Many of us can become so ingrained in the day to day upkeep of our lives we don't take enough time to even breathe and to refresh our hearts and spiritual lives. Sure many of us are lucky to have jobs or roles to fill that mirror our gifts and we rely on our education and experience to see us through. But every now and then the well runs dry and we are left parched and needing.

IN the routine of our lives we tend to go on with the all important work of making decisions, filling slots, coaching others, moving programs, celebrating sacraments with little time for reflection or discernment of where God may be in the mix.

As a church we too can easily find ourselves operating on customs or systems of operation that have worked in the past and without any thought of where the Spirit of God may be calling us today. We function insisting that these same customs and systems are going to see us through forever. And on the occasions we take the opportunity to discern we fill it with all sorts of program planning and goal setting. In light of this we might ask the

question: Where is God in all of our plans? Are we in touch with God's plan for us?

We encounter the early church community in the scripture this morning raising essentially similar concerns. In Acts we find Peter reflecting on the need for their to be 12 disciples who could continue the witness of the resurrected Lord. Rather than using methods like who had the most experience or who was the most popular or had the most money they prayed about it and left it ultimately to God. Matthias was chosen.

The initial act of any true discernment is to trust that God indeed cares and wants us to live into all that God has dreamed for us, intended for us.

The second act of discernment is to patiently listen for God amidst all the experiences of our life. Many of us are good at shielding those experiences that we deem as unworthy, undeserving of God's presence. Yet often if we truly trust and listen we may discover in these places the rooted presence of the Holy Spirit.

Another insight is that true discernment seldom leads you to the whole truth but rather bits and pieces of the truth at times are indeed revealed.

We should be weary of running into the person who goes off on a spiritual pilgrimage and comes back possessing certainty that he or she is now enlightened with the fullness of God's will. Obviously new insights do in fact come to one who opens their ears and hearts to scripture but those insights can also become as idols. Intensity of insight does not always translate into the clarity of vision or purpose.

(She or he return home with the incredible insight that the Sky is blue. Like one who dabbled a little too much in 60's drug culture... I mean its really blue man.)

That it is why we have the third act of discernment to share our insights from prayer with God within a faith community. Our church community could indeed serve as a wonderful resource for such faith sharing.

The gospel today reminds us of what God intended for his disciples. He wanted them not to hide away in some closet. He wanted them to carry on by spreading the Good News that in their midst was the very light of God. We who claim Jesus Christ as our Lord, as our Saviour, as our Redeemer might want to keep that relationship we have with Christ alive enough for us to find in our own lives new direction and hope.