

## Making a graced Decision

### Preliminary Considerations

1. Prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit should accompany this process.
2. This discernment isn't based upon looking for miraculous signs as proof of God's will in a particular direction, but rather an attentive listening to the movements of the Holy Spirit within oneself using his/her God-given faculties of intellect, emotions, will, and spirit.
3. Clarity of a particular direction may come only gradually and sometimes without absolute certainty. A graced decision always allows for an element of faith and may invite greater trust in God.
4. A graced decision is made in freedom. God is not going to force you against your own will. But God desires that our will be more and more formed by the seeking of his divine will. As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but yours be done."
5. Even the struggling back and forth can eventually lead to a greater ownership and integration of the decision to be made. Thus, making a graced decision is an act of love.
6. A decision or change of direction should not be made when a person is experiencing 'spiritual desolation'. Spiritual Desolation is an interior movement 'away from God' often characterized by shame for sin, fear, excessive anxiety, despair, resistance to prayer, etc. The Sacrament of Reconciliation should be sought by those experiencing a lack of freedom due to sin. Spiritual direction and/or counseling can be helpful in sorting through other desolations including those that are psychological.
7. Discussing this process with a spiritual director would be very helpful.
8. A graced decision must be in conformity with God's universal will and the teaching authority of the Church.

### Method:

1. State a proposition. The proposition must be stated as concretely as possible including specific details. The proposition should also be formulated affirmatively in a way that is attractive to you. An example of a proposition is "To serve as catechist for the youth group in my parish."
2. List the advantages and disadvantages. Make a list of advantages and disadvantages including all the reasons that bear upon your thinking. Do not discriminate at this point between 'good' or 'bad' reasons, but be as comprehensive as possible. The list should not be made hastily, but allowed to develop over a few days as is appropriate and possible.
3. Observe your feelings. Be attentive to how you feel about the various advantages and disadvantages that you list. Consider why you might feel that way. Feelings are important to pay attention to because the indwelling Holy Spirit could be working through them. But feelings are not absolute indicators of God's will. Their causes need to be discerned. Feelings can indicate a movement of the Holy Spirit, but could also be triggered by selfishness, weakness, or brokenness.
4. Begin to sense what reasons are more significant. You'll notice that some disadvantages may weigh more heavily upon your thinking and feeling. Take note of this. How does the weight of such reasons compare with others? It may be that one or a few reasons may be significant than others.

5. Pray over the list and consider it from God's perspective. When you pray over the list, what impressions strike you when the reasons are considered within the context of your relationship with God? You might imagine yourself speaking with Jesus about the various advantages and disadvantages in the list. How does he respond? Are there any thoughts or feelings that have changed when you pray with the list?
6. Consider your motives and detect a leaning of your will. Now pull it all together. You've thought about the advantages and disadvantages of your proposition, observed your feelings about them, prayed with them. Bringing this all together, consider the sources of your motives. Is anything coming from selfishness or fear? How do you feel God is motivating you? Although your motives may or may not be 100% pure, is God possibly drawing you in one direction? Consider how the Holy Spirit may or may not be inclining your will. After being in this discernment process for a few days you'll notice an inclination or 'leaning' that is relatively more consistent in one direction over the other.
7. Make a Tentative Decision. Live with a tentative decision for a short while to see whether it is affirmed by peace.
8. Make a Final Decision.