

DISCERNMENT

AND

INTERCESSION

by Sister Stephen

(This teaching was originally given to a group of intercessors
from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal
in Philadelphia, PA, USA during October of 1983.)

OPENING PRAYER

+ In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Holy, Almighty Father in Heaven, we give thanks and praise and honor and glory to You today. Thank You for the privilege, Lord, that we can come here in the Mighty Name of Jesus. Father, we dedicate even this time of study as a special prayer of intercession. We lift up to You all of our people and intentions. Even more, we lift up Jesus in the intentions remembering His promise, “If I am lifted up, I will draw all men to Myself.” (John 12:32) (JB)

Lord, we give You permission to reach out through us. Work Your Mighty Miracles in us and through us for the glory of Your Name, the Mighty Name of Jesus. Do everything You would like to do.

Come, Holy Spirit, with Your special Grace of Revelation. Give us the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding that we might understand the meaning of Spiritual Discernment in intercession and how we can work with You to bring Heaven into the Earth.

Almighty Father God, we promise to give You all the praise and honor and glory for all that You have done, all that You are doing, and all that You will do. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.



We have dedicated this time to Jesus as a prayer of intercession. Let's take a little time to pray now. And instead of going to Jesus and telling Him how big our problems are, let's go to our problems and tell them how big Jesus is! Amen! Let's praise the Lord and pray in the Spirit in intercession now. Open Heaven and invite the Angels to bring our people to Jesus. Alleluia! Amen.

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Credits:

Special THANK YOU TO God –
our Father, our Lord Jesus Christ
and our Beloved Holy Spirit!

Special THANK YOU TO
all FBB Intercessors for their great prayer support
and whose editorial expertise has assisted
in writing this small book.

God bless you abundantly! Glory to God!

(Bible quotations taken from the New Jerusalem Bible
and Bible Gateway online translations)

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PROLOGUE

Some years ago, when Sister Stephen visited and talked to me about the work of the **Catholic Charismatic Intercessors of the Fellowship of the Burning Bush (FBB)**, I responded after listening to her carefully:

"Sister, the intercession is the essence itself of the the Church. The Church is Christ, and Christ is The Intercessor yesterday, today, and forever. We do not have another Christ that will reconcile us with the Father but the One Who lives interceding for us in His Own Glorious Existence and Who, from the Father, gives to us His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of New Life. Therefore, to speak of intercession in the Church, is to speak of what His Own Essence as Body of Christ is; even more, as the Christ that the Church is, and that makes Her Lord present in history and in the world." (2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:20, 22).

I must confess that in that conversation, I understood more clearly that the intercession prayer is an essential condition, so that the Church will accomplish its mission of salvation of men and women of all nations and of all times. The work of FBB makes reference to this fact, recognized from the beginning in the Church, of the presence and action of the charismas that the Holy Spirit gives to the Church for its own edification so that it will fulfill its mission efficiently. FBB Intercessors make an effort to convert intercession to a permanent prayer, lived in community and in groups interrelated by the bonds of charity, within the unity of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. The charisma of the intercession prayer takes place in the communion of a life of prayer nourished by the Fire of the Love of God.

In my opinion, the work of FBB provides something new to the mystic experience of the Church. In our times, it is one more manifestation of the permanent Pentecost in which the Church is immersed. It is like a strength that renews, a wind, a fire, a shaking that seeks to renew the conscience of the missionary power and sanctifying power of the intercession prayer in the Church.

+ Francisco Maria Aguilera Gonzalez
Auxiliary Emeritus Bishop of Mexico, México, D.F., June 29, 2001

I. INTRODUCTION

The Holy Spirit gives us many Gifts. Among these gifts are what we call *charismatic gifts*. (1 Corinthians 12: 8-11). And one of these *charismatic gifts* is the *Gift of Discernment*. Discernment can have different meanings according to the situation where we use it. What the Holy Spirit has given us is what we can call the Gift of Spiritual Discernment. We are going to study here about spiritual discernment and what it means for us in intercession. First, we will look at regular spiritual discernment. Then, we will talk about spiritual discernment for intercession. Then about the signs of the times and discernment.

A. WHAT IS SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT?

One time, I was in an intercession group giving a teaching on discernment. As we begin, I asked everyone, “Have any of you ever experienced the gift of discernment?” One or two people raised their hands.

So then I said, “Let me ask you this question in another way. Can any of you think of just one time in your life when you experienced the Presence of Jesus. And you knew that you knew Jesus is here? Nobody had to tell you. You knew it was Him. Maybe when you received Holy Communion or sometime when you were praying?” Everyone raised their hands. Then I said, “Thanks be to God, I was worried about you for a minute. What did you think I meant when I first asked you if you experienced the gift of discernment? Did you think of some discernment of evil? The first and most important spiritual discernment is the discernment of the Presence of Jesus. Unless we personally experience the Presence of Jesus, we will never know what is NOT Jesus. He is the measure of all spiritual experience. So you all have the gift of spiritual discernment working. Thanks be to God!”

The Lord Jesus is the mirror against which we can measure everything in relation to Heaven and earth. He is the Revelation of the Fullness of the Truth of God and man. He IS God-man. St. Paul said that God has spoken to us in so many ways throughout creation and history; but now everything He ever wanted to say, He has spoken completely to us in His Son, Jesus Christ. (cf. Hebrews 1:3)

The Lord Jesus lived Life and Death and Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven, even being raised up to the Right Hand of God the Father. He is the only One Who has traveled everywhere and gained victory over everything on Heaven and on the earth and under the earth. (Philippians 2:6 - 11) Therefore, He is declared Lord over all Heaven and earth. And He is the Only One, Who can lead us safely through both the visible world and the spiritual realm to the Father; the Only One Who can guide us. He IS The Way. (John 14:6) Therefore, He is THE MEASURE that God gives us for the spiritual discernment of all matters.

Let us turn to the Gospel of St. John. Jesus says,

“I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow *because they know His Voice*. They never follow a stranger but run away from him; they do not recognize the voice of strangers.”

“I am the Good Shepherd; I know My Own and My Own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My Life for My Sheep.”

“There are other sheep I have that are not of this fold. I must lead these too. They too will *listen to My Voice*, and there will be only one flock, one Shepherd.”

(John 10: 1-5; 11; 16) (JB)



HOW GOD CAN SPEAK TO US

My Sheep “know My Voice.” My sheep “listen to My Voice.” To “listen to the Voice of God” is what I call the commandment before the Ten Commandments. Throughout the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, whenever God speaks to His People, the first thing He always says is, “Listen to My Voice”. Again, whenever He would correct or accuse them for doing wrong, the first thing always He says is, “You did not listen to or obey My Voice.” (cf. Psalm 81: 11, 13)

Besides having an experience of Jesus, do we recognize when the Lord is speaking to us? He said in the Gospel of John, “My sheep follow Me because they know My Voice.” (cf. John 10) So recognizing the Voice of the Lord is the *second most essential point for spiritual discernment*.



God can speak to us. Do we recognize when God is talking to us? Can we tell when He is speaking? Maybe at times we are unsure? Many people have said to me, “God never talks to me.” So, I want to do a short practical workshop with you, in order to help you see how God can speak to you. Are you ready?

Close your eyes. Picture in your mind a beautiful red rose all in bloom. See how that picture is in your mind. God can give you pictures the same way. OK. Finished. That wasn’t so difficult.

Let’s do another workshop. Close your eyes again. This time I want you to hear someone speak to you and say “I love you.” Do you see how those words are in your mind? God can put words in your mind just like that. Amen. Finished. That wasn’t so difficult.

Do you see what can happen? When God communicates with us, He communicates through our “radio equipment”. God is Spirit and so He will first communicate with our spirit. And that overflows into our minds, our imagination, our thoughts, our feelings, our desires, into our hearts. He uses our “radio equipment” to speak to us. From our side, we

need to tune in our radio so we can be on God's frequency and hear Him more clearly. The Holy Spirit helps us with this in many ways. Praise and worship are the most powerful way to tune into God's frequency, because of the promises He gives for praise and worship. For example:

“God makes His Home in the Praises of His People.” (Psalm 22:4) (JB)

Sometimes people have trouble recognizing the Voice of the Lord because they think, “I am just thinking these ideas.” That is true. We are thinking it. However, who put the idea there? Maybe the Lord is inspiring us with these ideas.

For example, have you ever experienced this: Maybe sometime you were at home working, and the idea keeps coming to you, “I wonder what is happening with my friend?” “I just have to go see that friend of mine.” Finally, you just go to see them and find out it really was important that you visited them. They really needed you to come. So that was God inspiring you to go. God was speaking to you by these thoughts in your mind. Alleluia!

One time, I was on retreat at a hermit community of the Camaldolese Benedictine monks. They are hermits that live mostly in silence in hermitages. They come together in community for Mass and prayer and sometimes for a meal or recreation. I was on retreat there praying and studying about intercession. One day, I asked the superior, “Can I talk to some of the monks and ask them how they experience intercession and how they experience the Lord working with them and talking to them? Could I interview the monks?” So He gave me permission.

As I talked with some of them and I asked them, “As a monk, your life is consecrated to the worship of God and intercession for the Church. What do you experience as you go through your day? How does God speak with you? Do you ever recognize Him calling you to prayer for others?” I tried to translate my questions into something they could

relate to. One of them said, “Sister, our focus is union with God.” So they were not focusing on intercession. They were focusing on union with God. So, I asked, “When you are going through the day, do you ever think of things to pray about, people or places?” They said “Sure, sometimes things come to mind. We just give it to the Lord and go on.” Actually, it was like they were not really taking hold of the intercession dimension consciously. Something would come to their minds and they just simply gave it to the Lord and continued on with what they were doing. They did not focus and go deeper with the Spirit to pray the things through into victory, like the Lord does with us in intercession.

But, it was interesting to see how God was working with them. As they shared some of their experiences, I could say, “Oh that was God speaking to you.” While they would not actually say that, God was talking to them; telling them things, showing them what and how to pray about things. He was speaking and working with them, even though they might not describe their experience in the way which we might. God was speaking to them in their lives. So, the Lord can speak to us even when we are not expecting or seriously asking Him to speak to us. However, it is better when we are paying attention to His subtle messages in the Holy Spirit.



ONE CAN OF FOOD IN THE CUPBOARD

I want to share one more story called: One Can of Food in the Cupboard. As a Franciscan Missionary, I live in faith dependence on the Lord. I do not get a salary for the work I do. I have to trust God for everything.

In 1985, I was serving in a special time of intercession in Florida. At that time, the Lord provided for me to live in a little two-room apartment at the back of someone’s house. There, I could have the needed time for prayer and study, and then go out to serve God’s people. When I arrived there, I met the neighbors who had a restaurant. They told me, “Sister you are welcome anytime you want to come over and work for us and we will give you money for whatever you need.”

One morning, about the second week I was there, I went out into the kitchen and opened the cupboard. There was only one can of food in the cupboard! I said, “Lord, this is serious! We have only one can of food in the cupboard! And I am going to be here for two and one-half more months! What do you want me to do? I am not leaving here until we get this worked out!” Do you ever get serious with God like this?

So then I told the Lord the options I could think of:

First, Lord, the neighbors invited me to come over and work to earn some money for whatever we needed. I am willing to do this if You want. However, if I do that, I cannot do Your Work. Please. What do You want me to do?

Second: You know I am a Franciscan, so I can beg. If You want me to, I will go out to beg for what we need. But I am not just going to do this on my own. I need You to tell me what to do. What do You want me to do?

Third: There is another possibility. I have heard of some people who just prayed and You provided what they needed. Now, I never tried that one. But if You want me to do this, I will do it. Just tell me what to do.

So I got out my guitar and started praising the Lord at the top of my voice, just pounding on the doors of Heaven. One hour. Two hours. The more I prayed, the more my stomach was getting tied up in knots. The more I thought about these possibilities, the more I was getting worried and uptight. You know how we can tend to plan out our **WHOLE FUTURE** when we get in a situation like this!

After about two and one-half hours, the Lord finally spoke to me in His Quiet Voice in my heart. And He said, “Do you need it today?” So I stopped to think. That day was prayer meeting day. All of us decided to fast for the meeting. So I did not even need any food. So then the Lord said to me, in big capital letters in my mind: “**TRUST ME.**” So I said, “**OK, I WILL TRUST YOU.**” It took me another 30 minutes to **TRUST GOD** - to let go of the whole situation to Him. Then, I went about my studies to prepare for the meeting, as I was supposed to give the teaching that night.

Later on that day, the Lord spoke to me again. He said, “Make out a grocery list and give it to Me.” So I made out the list. And of course everything was on the list, because I did not have anything. So after I made the list, I said, “What do You want me to do with the list?” And I started to go through all the questions and anxiety again. Again the Lord said to me in big capital letters in my mind: ‘TRUST ME.’ So I said, “OK, I WILL TRUST YOU. YOU ARE MY HUSBAND. IT’S YOUR JOB TO BRING IN THE FOOD. I AM GOING TO TRUST YOU!” So again I gave it all back to Him and we got through that day.

Very early the next morning, I heard someone calling my name. This was one of three ladies I met when I came. The Lord had told us to pray together for their husbands for three months. So we were meeting each week at a different home to pray. Now to appreciate this whole situation better, this was one of those people who say, “The Lord never talks to me.” Did you ever meet anyone like that?

On this morning she came to see me very early. And she had a big box in her hands. She said, “Sister, I was doing some shopping for my family. And I just thought, maybe I will get a few things for you.” So I said, “Praise Jesus! Please come right in.”

So she came in and we started to take things out of the box and checking them off the list. Do you know that everything in that box was on my list!!! Alleluia!!! I said to her, “Did you tell me that God never talks to you? Look, here is my list!” We were both amazed! God did two miracles. He talked to her; and He sovereignly answered my prayer. Glory to Jesus! Alleluia! God is Faithful!



I share this story with you, because I believe God is talking to all of us all the time. Often we just don’t recognize when it is Him. We need to understand something about the Lord when it comes to hearing His Voice. God is more concerned that we hear His Voice than we are. He is more concerned that we know His Will than we are, because His Name and His Reputation and His Glory are at stake in every situation. So He

is more concerned than we are that His Name is honored and that we are getting His Message right.

Also, God knows how to get through to each one of us. Sometimes you might be talking to someone and it feels like you are talking to the wall. They just do not understand what you say. But the Lord can take that word we speak and later on remind them. He can bring it around again, reminding them again. The Holy Spirit can work the word into their hearts. He is the real missionary in our lives. He follows up on everything. He knows how to get through to people. It might be something you said that you did not even expect that touches that person's life. The Lord knows how to take our words and break into someone's heart. Alleluia!



When we are born again in Christ and the Holy Spirit comes to abide in us, He gives us the *Gift of Spiritual Discernment*. We can say that *spiritual discernment is basically the Holy Spirit's response in our spirit to whatever spirit is behind our experiences in the spiritual or invisible world, or from the visible world around us - on whether they be from God or the devil*. There are only two possibilities in the spiritual realm: God or the devil.

The first and most important work of the Holy Spirit is to give us the primary experience for spiritual discernment, which is discerning the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He reveals Jesus to us. We experience the Presence of Jesus by the Grace of Revelation. When we come to personally know God the Lord Jesus, we now have the main way to test our other experiences in life to and so discern what is of God and what is not of God. The Holy Spirit can work through spiritual discernment to help us find God's Will and God's Way. He can guide us through the visible world and the invisible or spiritual world, safely home to our Father in Heaven. He can also guide us by spiritual discernment in intercession, so we can understand the situation of others as God sees them. Then, He can lead us in how to pray to bring heaven into earth now. Alleluia! Come Holy Spirit! Amen.

II. MEASURING STICKS OF DISCERNMENT

As I already mentioned, spiritual discernment is a Gift from the Holy Spirit. In the Holy Bible, the Holy Spirit tells us in several places to test our spiritual experiences to see what spirits are behind these experiences.

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4: 1; cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:20 - 21; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15) (NRSVCE)

How do we test spiritual matters? How do we work with the Holy Spirit and His Gift of Discernment? How do we work with the Lord Jesus, Who said, “I am The Way? (John 14:6)

Let us answer these questions by looking at what the Holy Spirit has given us to use in spiritual discernment and how He works. He has given us various tools to use and methods we can follow. We can call these *spiritual measuring sticks*, always keeping in mind that the Lord Jesus Himself is the main measuring stick for spiritual discernment.

There are two main types of measuring sticks we will study: One of these we can call *internal measuring sticks for discernment*. These are inside of us. A second we can call *external measuring sticks for discernment*. These come from outside of our selves. After we study how these work in normal discernment, we will study discernment in intercession. Then we will look at the signs of the time and discernment.



A. INTERNAL DISCERNMENT

Internal spiritual discernment operates in our human nature. As we study the internal measuring sticks which we can use in spiritual discernment, we want to first review some basic teaching on human nature.

THE SPIRITUAL MAN ^[1]

“May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may *your spirit and soul and body* be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(1Thessalonians 5:23; cf. Hebrews 4:12) (RSVCE)

God has made each of us in His Image and likeness. (Genesis 1: 26) God is a Trinity of Persons, (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), in One God. So God’s Image is reflected in mankind as a trinity of his spirit, soul, and body in one human person. This is what St. Paul refers to in his prayer.

When a person is created by God, he inherits an unredeemed nature resulting from the sin of Adam. Man’s spirit is dead and cut off from God. His soul and spirit and body function out of God’s original order. That is, the body controls the soul controls the spirit. And the spirit is so submerged in the soul that we cannot tell the difference between our souls and our spirits; so we really do not function as God meant us to function.

When we are born again and filled with the Holy Spirit, God Himself makes us a new creation through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Blood of Jesus Christ.

“I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will

^[1] cf. Many ideas here are from “The Spiritual Man” by Watchman Nee: <http://www.ministrybooks.org/watchman-nee-books.cfm>

cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

“I will put My Spirit within you, and make you follow My Statutes and be careful to observe My Ordinances. - you shall be My People, and I will be your God.” (Ezekiel 36: 25 -28)
(NRSVCE)

When a person is born again in Christ Jesus, God gives him a new spirit, a new life, and purifies his unredeemed human nature from all sin. Our spirit is no longer dead. God wakens our spirit. That new spirit becomes the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God and Eternal Life. God Himself begins to abide in our spirits, imparting Eternal Life and providing the spiritual ability to know God and His Son Jesus Christ even now. (cf. John 17: 2- 3; and 2 Timothy 1:12)

Then the Holy Spirit works to apply the Victory of Jesus by His Refining Fire to transform our whole nature into the likeness of Jesus Christ Himself. (cf. Romans 8 28-29; Malachi 3: 2-4) He works to reorder our nature so the Holy Spirit controls our spirit, which controls our soul, and in turn controls our body, which guides our living. It is then that the Lord Jesus can actually become Lord of every aspect of our life and our living.

The miracle of Holy Eucharist is also powerful in this whole transformation process. We can actually receive the Lord Jesus Christ, in His Glorious Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. The Lord Jesus comes to us in this Holy Sacrament through the Power of the Holy Spirit. As we receive the Lord and come into one with Him, He miraculously works to transform us into Himself. What an awesome Gift! Alleluia! Our part of this spiritual journey is to cooperate and surrender to the Holy Spirit so He can do His work. Come, Holy Spirit, help us! Praise God!

Each part of our nature has special functions. These are like “gateways” into the inner most being and workings of a human person. They are

also the means through which we can relate to God, to the spiritual world, and to the visible world around us.

We know that our body has the ability of *five senses* to see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. With these senses, we relate to the physical world. These abilities are activated by what is physically around us. For example, with the light shining, we can see.

Our soul is the seat of our person and the source of consciousness and life in the body. Our soul has the ability of the *mind or intellect* to rationalize, to understand, to remember, and to imagine. Our mind is seated in our brain. Also, in our soul is our *will*, which can judge as well as choose, and our *emotions*, by which we can feel, especially to love. The soul is the meeting point where the spirit and the body join, making it possible for the spirit and the body to communicate and to cooperate.



SPIRIT OF MAN

Our spirit is the center of our whole being. Our spirit is the most crucial part of man's nature because it is our spirit which is able to communicate with God, Who is Spirit. Through our spirits, we can enter into the Eternal, Divine, and invisible realm. When we are born again, God gives New Life, Resurrection Life, to our spirit, which enables us to relate to God as His Own Children.

“What you received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the Spirit of Adoption, enabling us to cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are Children of God.”

(Romans 8: 15-16) (JB)

The Presence of the Holy Spirit awakens and activates, or quickens all the faculties of our human spirit. Through our spirit, the River of God is ever ready to flow out with every good gift from Heaven and with the Victory of Jesus into the rest of our human nature. Then through us,

especially by intercession, He can flow out through us into the spiritual world and into the natural world around us. God can also touch us deeply or “burden” us in our spirits, and in this way empower and call us to *work, intercede, and preach for God*. (cf. Colossians 4:12). *Here also is where we resist all the attacks of the enemy and obtain authority to overcome the devil and his army by the victory of the Blood of Jesus Christ.*

The nature of our soul and our body reflect the invisible reality of the spiritual world. Therefore, every faculty we find in our soul or body has a parallel in our spirit. So, we have spiritual senses and abilities. We can spiritually see, hear, smell the fragrance of heaven; and rejoice, grieve, anticipate, love, fear, approve, condemn, decide, discern. When we are born again in Jesus Christ, the Presence of the Holy Spirit awakens and activates or quickens all the abilities of our human spirit.

I am amazed sometimes when we pray what the Lord allows me to “see” and “hear” in heaven. One time as we worshipped the Lord, I could see the sound of our worship turning into cirrus-like clouds circling around the throne. And then they turned into wide chiffon-like streamers of many different colors. The sound waves turned into color waves circling around the throne. It was so beautiful! Another time, I could hear the sound of worship in heaven. It really was “like the roar of many waters” unto the Lord! (Revelation 14: 2) (JB) Alleluia!



Our spirit has three main faculties that work closely together:

**Intuition* by which we can know God and His Holy Will by direct revelation from the Holy Spirit; and where His anointing teaches us all Truth.” (1 John 2:20, 27)

**Fellowship* by which we can contact and enter into communion with God and worship Him; and

* *Conscience* which is called “the window of a believer's spirit”, where God’s Holiness is first expressed through man. Conscience is the

spiritual organ that God has given us to be able to distinguish between right and wrong.

The Holy Spirit works through our conscience as Jesus said,

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Advocate will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of *sin*, because they do not believe not in Me; of *righteousness*, because I go to my Father, and you see me no more; of *judgment*, because the prince of this world is judged.”

(John 16: 7-9) (JB)

Hence, it is our conscience which presses us to repent of our sins; to believe in and obey God; and to pursue the Goodness and Glory of God in order to receive His Promises. Therefore, it is also called the “faculty of our faith”.

All of these faculties of our spirits work together in various ways. There are many more things we can say about how our spirit works when filled with the Holy Spirit. However, we want to focus more deeply on *conscience* working with the Holy Spirit in spiritual discernment.



CONSCIENCE

Conscience exercises a most indispensable function in our human spirit. As I already mentioned, conscience may be called the *window of a believer's spirit*. The Light of God shines into our spirits through the window of conscience so we can directly know God and His Truth. Conscience gives our spirits the ability to discern right and wrong, that is, to recognize what is of God and what is not of God. Through its voice,

we can *know God's highest will for us today*. Therefore, conscience is key and essential as an internal measure for spiritual discernment.

After we have been born again, our spirit, with our conscience, is made alive. The precious Blood of the Lord Jesus purifies our conscience so that the conscience is clean and free in order to be able to function as God made it.

“How much more will the Blood of Christ, who offered Himself, blameless as He was, to God through the Eternal Spirit, purify our conscience from dead actions (sin) so that we can worship the Living God.”(Hebrews 9: 14) (JB)

The Blood of Jesus purifies our conscience and removes the spiritual obstacles between us and God - especially from sin and ignorance. Then the River of the Holy Spirit flows into us, and through our spirits into our whole life.

On the spiritual level, our conscience is informed by the Holy Spirit Himself. As we pray and surrender our whole lives to God, He will grow our innermost selves by giving us revelation of Himself and filling us with spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. God reveals Himself to us in our intuition by the Spirit of Wisdom and Knowledge. Then, He gives us a Spirit of Understanding which enables us to know the meaning of His Revelation and to know His Will.

With this wisdom and knowledge from our intuition, the conscience is informed of the Truth. The judgments made by *conscience are controlled by this spiritual knowledge*. According to this knowledge, it can then work in us to confirm to our minds and hearts what is good (what is of God) and condemn evil (what is of the devil). We need to pray daily as St Paul prayed for his people,

“May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, give you a Spirit of Wisdom and of Revelation in the Knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He

has called you, what are the riches of His Glorious Inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His Power in us who believe. “

(Ephesians 1: 17 – 19) (NRSVCE)

“May you be filled with the knowledge of His Will in all Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the Knowledge of God.” (Colossians. 1:9-10) (NRSVCE)

St. Paul prays for the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened. When God gives us revelation in our spirits, the Holy Spirit River can flow out into our hearts and minds to reveal God and God’s perspective and will. The Light of Christ that He shines in us *enlightens* our minds and hearts. (cf. John 1: 9) This enables our minds to know and interpret what God reveals to us and then apply it into our lives in good works for the Glory of God.

All the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are important for us in discernment – but especially wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel. These help us to rightly interpret discernments in order to know what God wants us to do with the discernments which we receive.

“Come, Holy Spirit! Enlighten us in our inner most being
to discern the Will of God.”



1. RIGHTLY FORMED CONSCIENCE

With this basic understanding of our human nature and especially our spirit with the faculty of conscience, let us consider some internal measuring sticks for spiritual discernment.

In regard to spiritual discernment, we have seen that our spirit with the faculty of conscience has the ability to discern God's Presence and what is of God and what is not of God. The Holy Spirit can flow out of our spirit into our heart and mind to enlighten us with the Truth.

On the level of our soul, we need to receive God's Truth and "put on the Mind of Christ" (cf. (1Corinthians 2:16) and allow God to "write His Laws in our hearts".

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove (discern) what is the Will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."
(Romans 12:2; cf. Jeremiah 31:33; 1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:13) (NRSVCE)

There is something we need to do to form or renew our minds and hearts. This can include studying sound Catholic, Biblical teaching, and living a Life patterned after the Lord Jesus Christ. The more our hearts and minds are rightly formed, according to God's Truth and Laws, the more we can readily receive the flow of the Holy Spirit from our conscience. Then, God can guide us more clearly on how to recognize (discern) what is right or wrong, and what is good or evil in the world around us. He can empower us to choose the good and reject the evil, and thus fulfill His Holy Will. (cf. Philippians 2:13)

Over the years, I was trained to know the Truth of our Christian Faith.. Perhaps some of you can say this as well. I was taught by Religious Sisters who were very clear on the truth in the Teachings of the Catholic Church and the Bible. I really thank God for this formation because it has provided and formed in me a solid foundation for discernment. Whenever I hear anybody speak, immediately I know if it is right or

wrong. I can hear and recognize the Truth in my spirit as well as in my mind and heart, because I have been formed in it. Thanks be to God!

In many countries, I have found that we now have perhaps a whole generation or more of people who have not been formed in the Truth and according to God's Laws. As a result, the things which we were taught as right and wrong, perhaps they have not been taught as right and wrong. For some people have been taught that whatever you feel like is good so go do it. In some cases, patterns of thinking and actions, which are really objectively wrong according to God's Laws and Commandments, are promoted as being good and right. In fact, people are even encouraged to think of evil as being *a right*; and laws are being passed to uphold that *right*. Also, some people say, "Everybody is doing it, so why not?" But "everybody doing it" is not the measure of right and wrong. Only the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, Who IS the Truth, can be that measure.

Without the proper formation of mind and heart, people are in a state of spiritual and intellectual ignorance. Hence, their communication with God is blocked. They cannot receive clear revelation of truth and guidance about right and wrong from the Holy Spirit through their conscience. Subsequently, they cannot rightly discern what is of God and what is not of God. It's like trying to shine a light through a glass of colored or very murky water. Any light that does get through shines out as colored or murky. The light cannot radiate clearly through it.

So, a rightly-formed, Spirit-filled conscience, together with a renewed informed mind and heart, act together as important tools of the Holy Spirit to help us discern what is of God and what is not of God.



2. STATE OF MIND

When we are trying to discern if something is from God or not, we need to be aware of what is our state of mind. What frame of mind are we in? Have we just been doing the dishes, cleaning the house, fixing the car, or talking to all kinds of people, when some idea comes into our heads? Or have we been praying, praising, and worshipping God and then some inspiration comes into our mind? Look at the spiritual atmosphere we are surrounded by, and the condition within our minds and hearts.

If I have been working around the house, as well as involved in many things, and something comes into my mind, I will not trust that inspiration. Later I will take it into prayer and present it back to God. I will say, "Lord, if this is coming from You, please confirm it." As we enter into praise and worship - into the spiritual atmosphere of God - He will confirm it if it is of Him. He will speak to us. He is more concerned than we are that we know His Voice and His Will because His Name is at stake.

The Holy Spirit works by praise and worship to help us tune into God's realm. He helps to clear out the distractions and the interferences that are in our nature and our experience so that we have a more clear communication in line with God. This happens as a fruit of God's Presence. Praise and Worship clear out the communication line so we can receive what God is communicating to us more clearly. So if we receive inspirations while we are in praise and worship, we can have more confidence that the inspirations are somehow from the Lord.

Sometimes, as we praise and worship the Lord, the Lord's Light shines more and more brightly inside of us. The Lord may even begin to show us things in our lives that are sin which we need to repent of, or where we need deliverance. The Lord brings into the light what was hiding because He wants us to give it to Him. He wants us to be free, holy, and filled with Himself, the Most Holy God. Then and only then, will we be better able to receive and discern the truth, what is truly of Him.

We often praise and worship the Lord deeply and out loud. When we have intercession vigils, sometimes, people ask why we pray as we do. “Why do you sing out with such loud praise and worship when the Blessed Sacrament is right there on the altar? Shouldn’t we just adore Jesus in silence?” Part of the reason we praise and worship the Lord out loud is because it is a main way God has given us to make our home in Him as He makes His home in us. (cf. John 15:4) In Psalm 22: 4, the Holy Spirit also reveals to us that God “makes His Home in the praises of His People.”

In praise and worship we are ministering to the Lord. Praise and worship changes the atmosphere and creates the atmosphere of Heaven in that place and in our hearts. God waits for our praise and worship to activate His covenant promises in the Holy Bible from Heaven into earth. And when we praise and worship Him in intercession, He even releases those promises long distance for others. If we don’t praise Him, He will not act. He waits for us to take the first step. He is the One Who said,

“Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7) (JB)

God has made conditions for us to follow in order to receive what He has promised. One of the main conditions is to ask for it. We have to open the door. He is waiting to be asked, to be invited. Praise and worship is God’s Way of asking. Because God gave us free will, He does not impose anything on us. He does not impose Grace or Blessings on us. If someone has prayed strongly for us and the Grace and Blessings are coming from their prayers, even then, He does not impose on us. He just immerses those we pray for in His Mercy and Love. But then He waits. He gives each one the freedom to make their own decision to open up their hearts to Him.

As we praise Him we are saying, “Yes, Lord. I am saying ‘Yes’ to You. I am lifting You up in my life and in the life of our people.” So, it is not a contradiction when Jesus is on the altar for us to be singing and dancing with all many praise and worship songs. In fact, it is God’s way

for us to go deeper into His Presence and welcome Him into our situations. Alleluia!



Our state of mind can also include the condition of our hearts. Are we willing to hear from God and are we willing to obey what He asks of us. One time I was ministering in a city with many intercession groups. As we were coming up to a Pentecost, the charismatics planned a big Mass and rally. I said to God, “Lord, how would You like to go to that Mass? I have been serving You a lot in all these groups. I think it is time that I get blessed. I would like to go to that Pentecost Mass. However, I want to go just to get blessed, and not do any ministering. I am not going to say anything. I am just going to get blessed. It is my turn, Lord.” That was my decision before I left the house. And I thought we had agreed on my plan.

So we went to the Mass and the celebration. As we were praising the Lord, here comes this little message in my head. I said, “Lord, I thought we talked about this before I left! I am not ministering today. You have to let somebody else have a turn. They need to learn how to minister these gifts of the Spirit too. I am not saying anything.”

We keep going through the Mass and again, here comes this little message. “Now Lord, please! I just want to rest today and get blessed. I am not getting up.”

By this time, we were up to Holy Communion. Again here comes this little message. So I said, “All right, Lord. Is that really You? You have to confirm this now. Let someone get up and say something to confirm the message. Also, please will You tell the leader that after Communion You would like him to say that he is going to give us time to share God’s messages.” After Communion that leader got up and said, “If anybody has a message from the Lord, would you please come up and share it.” The first person went up and shared a Bible verse. It was an exact confirmation of my message!

So here comes the message to me again. I said, “Lord, if you really want me to say this, would You please let somebody else get up and say the first part of the prophecy and stop just where mine starts.” I was really being difficult with the Lord. Somebody got up and they gave this beautiful prophesy and it stopped just exactly where mine started.

I never got up. I never said anything and nobody said the words the Lord told me for His people. I had to go to Confession and ask God for forgiveness for my rebellion. I said “no” to God before I even went to the Mass! So when He did give me a message, I couldn’t move. I was stuck in “no.”

Perhaps some of you in your lives have been affected by things that have happened to you in the ministry of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Maybe you have been hurt. Maybe people around you didn’t understand rightly about the way the Holy Spirit works so they told you that your idea was from the devil. Then you felt hurt and confused, wondering if the inspirations coming to you are from God, the world, the devil, or yourself. And you decided that you are not saying anything ever again! You made that decision. If that has happened to you, I want you to repent of your “no” to God and replace that decision by speaking out loud right now with a new decision of “yes” to God today. Forgive those people. Everybody is still growing in understanding the Holy Spirit and discerning how He works. He is God! Please just say

“Lord, please forgive me for saying “no” to You. I forgive those people who hurt me. They did not know what they were doing. I change that past decision and make a new decision today to open my heart to You. I say, ‘Yes, I come to do Your Will. I am ready for whatever You want me to do.’”

“Ready!” That was Abraham’s response to God. He was called a *friend of God*. Whenever God called Abraham’s name, he would say? “Ready! I am ready!” So God could easily bless others through him. Isn’t that a wonderful response! Alleluia! Are you ready?

3. LOOKING FOR THE LORD

The next point is: We need to have a continuous attitude of **actually looking for the Lord**. And we need to really ask the Lord to come and speak to us - actively seeking the Lord! He says in Jeremiah,

“If you seek Me with all your heart, I will let you find Me.”
(Jeremiah 29:13) (JB)

This attitude of actively seeking God opens the door of our heart so that He can speak to us. I have met people who do not do this. Whenever they have a problem, some people might say, “I am getting all these attacks from the devil!” So, the first thing they do is rebuke the devil in the Name of Jesus! We need to adjust our thinking. If Jesus is really Lord, we need to treat Him as Lord. Look for Him first in every situation.

God is sovereign over everything. Jesus is the Lord. This is really true! And there is nothing outside of Jesus. Nothing can happen in heaven or on earth unless the Lord gives permission for it to happen. The authority of Jesus includes over the devil. The devil cannot move unless the Lord gives him permission to move for a reason - God’s reason. This is why we all also have to learn to **GO TO JESUS FIRST** in everything!

Why does God let the devil come and tempt us? Maybe the Lord is trying to get a message through to us. He might be saying, “Excuse Me, you have a hole in your spiritual wall right there. Come on now! Patch it up!” If we do not ask God’s help to understand what is really going on, or if we just rebuke the devil when we have a problem, maybe the devil will go away for a while, but the hole is still there in our spiritual wall. And we actually miss God and His message to us! Also, the devil may come right back again, because we didn’t patch up the hole.

Look at David in the Holy Bible. David was so close to God that he could hear God speaking to him through his enemies. Can we? Read some of the experiences of David and see how God can use our enemies, even the devil, to accomplish God’s purposes. God can redeem anything.

“All things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to His Purpose.” And what is His Purpose? That we would “be made into the Image and Likeness of His Son.” (cf. Romans 8:28 - 29) (NRSVCE)

One time I heard this quotation translated in a new way by a wonderful brother in the Lord. He said, “God will bless us or afflict us with friends according to what we need.” Amen. Alleluia!

Do you remember, one day St. Peter and the disciples were out in the boat, and Jesus came walking toward them on the water. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, if that is really You, tell me to come to You across the water.” Jesus said, “Come on.” As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, the Lord kept him on top of the water. As soon as he took his eyes off Jesus, he started sinking. We can learn a lesson from this story. It has to do with the focus which we need to have in our lives.

What is God’s Focus? Did you know that when God looks at us, He does not see problems? Do you know what He sees? He sees Jesus! And when He looks at us and our situations through Jesus, He sees every situation as an opportunity for a new creation, for a new resurrection miracle! This is true for both our personal lives and for intercession.

We also need to be *looking for Jesus*. We need to be looking at our lives and those we pray for *through Jesus*. We need to change our ways of thinking so that no matter what happens, we can say, “God, what is the new creation that You are working here? What new resurrection miracle do You want to do here? And how can we pray heaven into earth here today?” In this way, we accept the Lord in the position of Sovereignty in every practical situation and He can manifest His Glory in our midst.

I remember one time when we were going to a meeting and we had to drive a long way on the freeway to get to the place. We were half-way there and the car stopped. Thanks be to God there was a petrol station right there. But the car would not start. I was supposed to speak at this meeting. I said, “Lord Jesus, what are You doing now? What do You want us to do? What are You asking for? I will give it to You right away,

Lord! We have to be at that meeting. I am going to be late for your meeting.” He said, “I would like you just to pray for a while.” So we sat in the car praying away, just the two of us, praising the Lord and praying. Soon somebody drove in. He came right up to our car and said, “Can I help you?” We told him the car would not start. He said he was a mechanic and that he would take a look. He put up the hood, turned a little something-or-other, and told us to try it now. It started! In the process, we told him about Jesus and prayed with him. Then we went on and got to the meeting on time. Do you know what God wanted? God wanted to touch that one man. It wasn’t about us. It was about the Kingdom of God. It was about the Purposes and the People of God. That is why He stopped us to touch that man. Isn’t it amazing! Jesus will go to the ends of the earth for just one person. Remember Jesus speaks in the Bible about the shepherd who left the ninety-nine to go find that one little lost sheep.(Luke 15: 1-7) God still does this today! Alleluia!

So for right internal discernment, we need to have the attitude of *looking for Jesus first* in every situation; *go to Jesus first*; and *be ready for His creative, resurrection miracles in every case*. Come, Holy Spirit, please help us!



Looking for the Lord is especially important in another situation. When God leads us to do something for Him or into some ministry, the enemy will try to get us off track to stop God’s work. He does this by immersing us in what we can call a **satanic fog**. He can do this in two different ways:

One way: He tries to overwhelm us with obstacles. We start thinking of all kinds of questions. We worry about many things, like what people will think of us or that we have no money. We may get discouraged if we do not see good fruit right away. Then we may think, “There are too many obstacles. Maybe God did not call me to this and I should just give up.” We are caught in a *satanic fog*. As a point of spiritual discernment, I would say that maybe God DID call you. But there is something you need to do to enter into God’s Plan and Holy Will in the atmosphere of all these obstacles and questions.

Second Way: We might become overwhelmed with so many possibilities of what to do in the ministry God has given us – so many needs of others, so many things God wants to do. In this condition, the *satanic fog* can set in so we may become almost paralyzed - not able to make a decision on what to do first, or not able to even move to do anything.

Or we may start going around trying to meet needs in every direction in our own wisdom and strength – which is built in failure. So we get caught a whirlwind of the *satanic fog* and end up not accomplishing anything of God’s Perfect Will for us. When I get so overwhelmed by what God has asked me in FBB ministry, the Lord will often say to me, “FBB is My Work. You just do what I tell you.”

The way to deal with *satanic fog* is:

First: Return to your original leading from God. Remember what God has given you to do is God’s Work not yours. (cf. Luke 17: 10) So, surrender it all back to Him again.

Second: Keep your eyes on Jesus, not on circumstances. Go to Jesus and ask Him what He wants you to do. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you. Remember what Mary Our Mother said at the wedding of Cana:

“Go to Jesus and do whatever He tells you.” (John 2:5) (NRSVCE)

Third: Remember, everything God does, including the ministry He has given you, is a New Creation. Therefore, praise and worship and intercession are essential to pray it into existence, to pray it into God’s provision, and to open the spiritual path ahead of you so you can enter into the Destiny He has for you. In the spiritual atmosphere of praise and worship, the Lord Himself will show you the steps He wants you to take to unfold His New Creation.

Fourth: Always remember:

***GOD IS FAITHFUL! AND
HE IS ABLE TO COMPLETE WHAT HE HAS BEGUN!
ALLELUIA!***

4. WATCH THE OUTPUT

When we are praying and God gives us inspirations, we need to **watch the output**. Watch how we are *interpreting* inspirations. We carry around on our shoulders these amazing computers – our heads! And as soon as there is a little input, we give output! Something comes to our minds, or someone says something to us, and immediately, we have a response. We are trained like this, aren't we!

In the things of God, we have to interrupt that process. If some inspiration comes to us in prayer, instead of automatically interpreting it and responding out of our personal experience and knowledge, we need to go to Jesus first. Go to the Holy Spirit. Take it back to God and say, "Lord, what does this mean? And what do You want me to do with this information?" Learn to work with Jesus and follow the Holy Spirit.

We have to understand that when God speaks to us, it is God talking! Our Big God is trying to get His Idea in our little head. And there is no way He can get the whole message in there at one time. We may catch a glimpse, a little bit of what He wants to reveal to us. (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12) When we pray, whatever comes to our minds and hearts, whatever we experience, we always need to take it back to the Lord and ask two questions,

"Lord, what does it mean? What do You want me to do with this?"

Ask Him to tell us more. "Lord, please explain what this means." Keep asking. Get in communication with God. Then He will give us more wisdom, understanding, and revelation. Alleluia!

One time I was talking to a Bishop. He said, "The biggest sin in the Church today is presumption." Presumption is taking something for granted. We assume we understand something. We don't ask about it. We don't check it out.

We may be baptized. We may receive the Lord in Holy Communion often. And the Lord is with us. However, we cannot presume that we are with Him. Are we with Him? Jesus said in John's Gospel,

“Make your home in Me as I make Mine in you.” (John 15.4)(JB)

There is something we have to do to keep ourselves in the Presence of God, to keep in Communion with God.



We also need to learn how to refine the ministry of the God's Gifts. Sometimes, you can tell what groups a person goes to by the way they pray and how they minister the Gifts of the Spirit. For example, maybe during prayer, God may speak to people. Then, as soon as they get a message from God, they are off praying away their own prayer. They turn the message into a great big long prayer. In another group, God's message might be shared as a teaching. I have heard some priests do this. When they get an inspiration from God, they turn it into a teaching instead of just saying it. Someone else might receive a message from the Lord and they go on to give everyone a great big theological discourse. And here we are in the middle of all this, trying to figure out exactly what did God say.

One time I was leading a prayer meeting and teaching them about intercession. We started out praising and worshipping the Lord. When I lead a group like that, the Lord shows me when it is time to change from praise and worship into some other work of the Holy Spirit. I could actually see in the Holy Spirit giving different people messages. I could see who the Lord was talking to. We kept praising until the Lord told me, “OK, now I am going to talk. It is My turn. Stop a minute and let Me speak.”

So I said to everybody, “What has been coming to your mind as we were worshipping the Lord?” Usually I do not ask anybody if they have a prophecy because that it would be too big of an idea for many people. So

I said, “Please stand up and share with us.” Suddenly we could feel fear in the room. People were afraid to say anything.

There was a little old man present, who was at the prayer meeting for the first time. He stood up and started telling a story. Now, if something is not in the right timing at the meeting, I have no problem saying, “Excuse me, will you please just wait on this story until a little later. Let’s focus on another point right now where the Lord is leading us.” But I asked the Lord first, “What do You want me to do, Lord?” The Lord said, “Let him talk.”

So he went on and on with his story. I couldn’t exactly figure out what he was talking about, but he kept talking away. When he sat down I asked, “Lord, what did he say?” The Lord said, “He was talking about My Love in his life.” So I said to everyone, “Let’s thank the Lord for all the Love He has given our brother in his life! Now does anybody else have anything they want to share?” People started to share some beautiful prophecies. The Love of God through that little old man seemed to push away all the fears. Praise Jesus!

After the meeting, I went over to visit with that little man. I said, “This is your first time here in the meeting. How was it for you?” He said, “Oh, Sister, it was so wonderful!” I said, “That is great! Praise Jesus! At the beginning of the meeting, you shared a beautiful story. Could you tell me what you were thinking about that reminded you of that story.” He said, “Well, to tell you the truth, there were some words coming into my mind.” I said, “Oh, what were those words?” He said it was ‘I love you. I love you.’ So God was giving him a prophecy, but he didn’t know what it was or what to do with it. So he translated it into a story.

Maybe this reminds you about your own experience of sharing. We all have to learn how ***to simply be reporters for God.*** We don’t have to figure out what His inspirations mean by ourselves. And we don’t have to change them into a prayer or a teaching or a story. Just say it. It doesn’t even have to make sense. It doesn’t even have to fit in when we are in an intercession group. When we are in intercession, God talks to different people about all kinds of different things at the same time. And

half of time, they don't seem to fit in with what we are praying. So we first need to try to be good reporters of God messages to us and simply say just what He gives us without changing it. As a point of discernment for intercession, I would say, if it does not seem to fit in with what is happening, it is probably the Holy Spirit. After we share what God gives us, then together we take it back to God and say, "What does it mean?" Maybe your message fits together with someone else's message. We need both parts to understand the whole message and see how to pray. By the end of a meeting, we will see how the Lord can put everything together. So I encourage you. If you think the Lord is inspiring you somehow, please, *just say it!*

For internal discernment, we need to watch the interpretations and the output we have to whatever comes to us in prayer. We need to take all back to Jesus to ask Him; "What does it mean?" and "What do you want us to with Your Inspirations?" The Lord will lead us when we ask.



5. THE GIDEON TEST

Some of you may have practiced the Gideon Test in internal discernment. **If something comes to your mind, you push it out and ask the Lord to bring it back if it is of Him.** If you push it out, and you keep you mind on Jesus in praise and worship, and it keep comes back to your mind, then it is probably a message from the Lord. We call this the Gideon test for discernment. We are asking God to confirm His Message by repeating it.

Do you remember the story of Gideon in the Bible? You can read the whole story of Gideon in Judges 6. He asked God to confirm his call and mission in many different ways. God was happy to answer him each time and give him assurance. God will do the same for us.

We can ask the Lord for confirmations. Go ahead and be Gideon for a little while. Remember how Gideon said, “Lord, if this is really You, I am putting that fleece out tonight. You make the fleece wet and not the ground.” The fleece got wet! The next night he said, “Lord, if that is really You, I want the ground to get wet and not the fleece.” That night, the ground got wet and not the fleece. It is OK to be Gideon! Again he asked for confirmation before he went into battle. And the Lord even spoke to him through his enemies. So, yes, go ahead and ask God for confirmation. He is happy to do it. (cf. Judges 6-7)

In this kind of discernment, we are not looking for spiritual experiences, but are looking first for Jesus, the Giver of all Good Gifts. However, St. Paul does say,

“Pursue love and earnestly seek the spiritual gifts - especially prophecy.” (1 Corinthians 14:1) (NRSVCE)

So it is more than ok for us to seek the Lord and earnestly ask for all His Gifts. It is also OK to ask God to confirm His inspirations by repeating them to us.

“Lord, I am not closing the door on You or any of Your Gifts. Lord, I want them all! All You have for us! If the inspirations I have received are from You, please bring them back again. Come, Holy Spirit. Here I am believing and receiving and waiting on You! Amen.”

As we pray this way, and continue in praise and worship with our focus on the Lord, He will speak to us again and repeat Himself. Or He might say the same thing in another way to get the message across. But we can be sure the Lord will answer and confirm what is from Him. He is more concerned that we get His Message clearly than we are. His Name and Reputation are at stake!

However, there comes a point where we have to stop asking for confirmation and simply believe and say or act on what God inspires us to do. If this means sharing what God shows you in intercession meeting, I encourage you to share and not be afraid. If you make a mistake with us in intercession, it's OK with me. The Lord will show us, and He will help us sort it out. I don't have a problem with people making mistakes. I make mistakes too. But the Lord always confirms, corrects, straightens us out. And He does work it all together for His Greater Good. Alleluia!



6. TEST THE SPIRITS

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that *Jesus Christ has come in the flesh* is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already. Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. “(1 JOHN 4: 1 - 4) (NRSVCE)

St. John admonishes us here to test the spirits to be sure if they come from God. This is an important test for spiritual discernment. He says whatever is from the Holy Spirit will acknowledge that *Jesus Christ has come in the flesh*. The devil will not acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. He runs the other way from that one.

We can apply this test by speaking to the source of where some idea or experience is coming from. We can say, “Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ has come in the flesh?” If it is coming from God, God will confirm it to us. If it is not coming from God, we will not receive any positive response. To discern this way, we need to be in worship. And, it is best to use this method of discernment together with other ways of discerning.

I do not test the spirits by this method very often. And I do not encourage anyone to start up a conversation with the enemy. However, this is a very important point for discernment. One way we can actually use this method is in the context of praying the “Hail Mary” in a situation that needs discernment. The first part of the Hail Mary is straight from the Holy Bible and is the profession the Heart of our Faith: *the Word became flesh*. So this prayer is a good context in which to test the spirits in discernment.

7. PERSONAL VICTORY


Personal spiritual victories in our lives have an important effect on our ability for internal spiritual discernment for a couple reasons.

First: When we are trying to discern specific situations, we need to check and see if we have the victory of Christ in the area of our lives that we are discerning. If we do not have the victory, then we are not able to hear God very well on that point for others, because there is too much emotional and intellectual interference going on. We just cannot hear God clearly. But once we get the victory in that specific area of our life, we can hear God more clearly on that kind of a situation for others.


For example, think of two young people in love trying to discern if they should be married. Have you ever seen two young people in love? They have a one track mind. They can only see good in the other person and that is all they talk about. So for them to try to objectively discern about marriage, there is no way they can do this alone. Any message from God to them is like light shining through a glass of colored water. All you see is the color. They will not be able to clearly hear the Lord. They might know in their hearts by the Charismatic Gift of Faith that this person is the *right one*. But they will not be able to objectively discern a decision. They need others to help discern God's Will.

I never trust myself to hear God on issues where I do not have the victory. I always go to somebody else to help for discernment. God can speak to me anyhow, but I am not going to trust it. I will look for discernment, confirmation, and clarification from others. I would never trust only myself. So seeking discernment from others is a good principle to follow to help protect us from deception.

Second, personal spiritual victory is important for intercession. If we gain victory in some area of our lives, this victory gives us spiritual authority to pray on the same point for others. Not only can we hear God better on that point of discernment, but we have answers from heaven to share with others in intercession. Alleluia!



One time the Holy Spirit invited a group of us to have an intercession meeting with parents to pray for their teenagers. As we began to pray, He led us to focus our prayer for the son of one of the couples. The Holy Spirit led us step by step in this prayer for about 20 minutes. Then we all experienced a breakthrough in the Spirit and everyone was full of joy. As we were dancing around rejoicing, the Lord said, “Now that you have the victory for one, share it with all the other young people.” So we did this in intercession. The victory we had in one case gave us a victory to share with others. Alleluia!



8. SUMMARY

We have been talking about some internal measuring sticks for spiritual discernment. I want to emphasize a few points.

First of all, the more time we spend with Jesus, the more sensitive we will become to His Voice. If we are not sure God talks to us, then we maybe need to take a day apart with God. Tell Him, “Lord, I am not leaving here until You talk to me and I know it is You.” We need to praise and worship and seek God until we get our own breakthrough. I cannot do this for anyone. Each one has to do this for themselves. The Lord will answer this prayer. And it is a wonderful gift God gives us, to be able to recognize His Voice.

Second, keep our focus on Jesus, Paul says in Ephesians,

“As every structure is aligned on him, all grow into one holy temple in the Lord; and you too are being built into a house where God lives in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2: 21-22)

He goes on to say that there are so many gifts given to us by God in the Body of Christ. As we focus on the Lord Jesus and use His Gifts, the whole Body of Christ comes into spiritual maturity and is built up. And when we all come into spiritual maturity the whole Jesus, the real Jesus, is revealed. (cf. Ephesians 4: 1-15)

I believe that this is the growing edge of the Church: that God’s People come into spiritual maturity and spiritual ministry in the Lord. Stop being spiritual babies, only coming to God to receive! It is time to grow up and serve God and His People with the Gifts the Holy Spirit gives each one.

I am challenging all of you to find how God wants you to serve Him. How does He want you to be working according to the strength in the Spirit and the grace He gives you to build up the Body of Christ? Nobody can take your place. Each one is a gift from God and has a Gift

to give! We should treasure the Gifts that God has given for the Glory of His Holy Name.

Finally, let us look at the heart of an intercessor.

Throughout the Holy Bible, We find many intercessors. The heart of every one of these intercessors is: Absolute concern with God's Glory. Why do we seek the Lord's Voice? Why do we seek the Lord's Gifts? It is because we love the Lord. It is because He has invited us to come. But even more than that, we need to come to the place where we are absolutely concerned for God's Glory - that He gets the credit for everything. Alleluia! All of the intercessors in the Holy Bible were more concerned about God's Glory than they were about getting their prayers answered. Can we come to this place? Holy Spirit, help us! Praise God!



B. EXTERNAL (OBJECTIVE) DISCERNMENT

External measuring sticks are from outside of our selves. They are given to us by the Holy Spirit to objectively test spiritual experiences.

1. THE HOLY BIBLE

The Holy Bible: We refer mainly here to God's written Word. The Holy Bible is a wonderful Gift to us from the Holy Spirit. This Divinely Inspired Library of Books is the written revelation of the Truth about who God really is and His Perspective about everything. God can speak to us through the Holy Bible, so His Living Word can help us discern what is of God and what is not of God.

People read the Holy Bible in many ways. Some focus on an intellectual understanding. Some read it from a more technical, scientific point of view. For this method, actually the Holy Bible is the best commentary available on the Holy Bible. For example, if you were to take the Gospel of John in the Jerusalem Bible and read all the cross-references to other books in the Bible, you would read over 90% of the New Testament.

Some people read the Bible prayerfully, in a meditative manner in a group - as in the Benedictine practice of Lectio Divina. They read the Bible, ponder it, pray about it, and contemplate it; trying to listen to the Lord so He can speak to them through His Word. Then they share.

A very beautiful way is the contemplative manner of reading the Holy Bible. Some books in the Holy Bible are written in a contemplative manner. In the Psalms, the Holy Spirit speaks something one way and then He says it again another way. The Lord Jesus often spoke this way. Some Saints and anointed preachers also preach or write in this way, like Saint John Paul II. When we read the Holy Bible this way, the Holy Spirit can take us back and forth to different related verses and open up Heaven with new revelations of God.

The best way to read the Holy Bible is with the Holy Spirit. Ask Him for the Grace of Revelation to meet God, to meet Jesus. Since the Holy

Spirit is God and knows the Heart of God and since He inspired the Holy Bible, He is the best One to “lead us into all the Truth.” (cf. John 16:13)

God can speak to us through the Holy Bible. As we pray and read His Word, we look for God and what He wants to speak to us today. Perhaps just one line will touch our hearts as you read. That is a message from God. When this happens, stop at that line and ask the Lord, “What are You trying to say to me today? What are you trying to reveal to me about Yourself.” The Holy Bible is like a window into Heaven. Jesus said,

“The Scriptures point to Me.” (John 5: 39) (NRSVCE)

Everything somehow points to Jesus Christ - Who He is; what He did; why He came. It’s really amazing! Some people teach the Holy Bible as a prophetic revelation of different *types* pointing to Jesus. Joseph in the Old Testament is a type of Jesus. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is revealed as the New Moses. We know some of these *types*. Everyone and everything in the Holy Bible somehow actually points to Jesus. It is awesome to read how God has spoken in this way to prepare the whole world and to reveal His Son. Alleluia! Glory!

When we pray, God may speak to us by allowing one verse we read to stand out to us. We can use that verse to go deeper into God as if going through a spiritual window and coming to know the Lord more deeply – to “gaze into the mirror that is Christ” (as St Clare of Assisi once said.) Then we let the mirror change us. The fruit of this kind of focus can be clearly seen by others, and is described by Peter and John: The people “recognized that they had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13) (NIV)



The Holy Bible is especially important for us in intercession. When God gives us a Bible verse in prayer, He is trying to tell us about a special way He wants to work in those for whom we pray. So we need to ask Him, “Lord, how do You want to come to our people? What do You

want to do for them? And how can we pray for others with Your revelation now?”

Seeking and finding God in the Holy Bible is a Revelation Grace we can ask for and receive for our personal lives and for intercession.



WHO IS GOD?

God has revealed Himself to us in so many ways. God has revealed Himself in a different way to each person in the Holy Bible. We can actually meet God in all the ways He has revealed Himself to the Holy Ones in the Bible. For example, He revealed Himself to Abraham in three different ways. Have you met the God of Abraham in all these ways? Is the God of Elijah real to you? What about the God of Moses? What about the Father of Jesus? Do you know Him.

Jesus said, “I am the Life.” and “Anyone who sees Me see the Father.” Do you know the Father as Life? Can you tell the difference between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit when you pray? They are different. And the Peace of Jesus is different than the Peace of the Father and the Peace of the Holy Spirit. Can you tell the difference?

When you live with someone a long time, you get to know them. Sometimes you can even tell who comes in the front door, you don’t even have to look. You may even be able to tell the condition they are in. God wants us to know Him that well. So if the Holy Spirit or the Father passes by, we recognize Who is here and can welcome them. The more time we spend with God in prayer, the more we will get to know God.

The Names of God in Holy Bible reveal an amazing glimpse into God’s Very Nature, Who He is and what He is able to do and has done. So many different names are given to God, and to God our Father, to the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, and to God the Holy Spirit. We might use these names in a litany of praise unto God as a springboard or way to invite God to manifest Himself among us now in specific ways.

As I said, we can meet God and experience Him in our lives in all these ways. When we are in intercession, God may manifest Himself in these different ways according to His Different Names. His Name can be a sign of how He wants to come to the people we are praying for. For example, we may be praying for someone and the Lord might give us Psalm 23, “The Lord is My Shepherd.” So, this can mean He wants to come to our people today as the Good Shepherd. So we ask Him, “How do You want to come as a Good Shepherd to our people? How do we pray Your Good Shepherd Gifts into their lives?” As we get to know God more, we will also understand how His different Names are a revelation of Who He is and how He can work through us in intercession. Then we can pray with Him and bring forth the fruits of His Presence in specific ways among His People.



The Holy Bible can be for us a means of external spiritual discernment. Sometimes, people use verses from the Holy Bible as an inspiration from God on what He wants them to do. Others use the Holy Bible to test and confirm if their own thinking or spiritual inspirations in their own prayers are from God. Mainly they do this in two different ways.

First: I have met some people, Protestants especially, who take just one verse from the Holy Bible and run with it, making plans of action on just that one line. Others may take that one line from the Holy Bible as the total confirmation of their experiences and use it as their basis to judge and act - even building entire denomination on one verse. The Catholic way of discernment with Holy Bible is to *take specific verses in context*; and to ask the Lord for more confirmations before they make decisions or judgments and act.



One time, on a mission trip, two of us went to visit a little Pentecostal Church called, “Jesus Only”. They were part of a whole denomination that believes that there is “Only Jesus.” They believe that the Father and the Spirit are manifestations of Jesus. They base their main doctrine on

one Bible verse from the transfiguration account of Jesus on Mount Tabor,

“They saw only Jesus.” (Matthew 17: 8) (JB)

Most Christians believe that God is One in three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That is how the Lord Jesus revealed God to us. As we talked with the Pentecostal Pastor, he started telling us about their “Jesus Only” doctrine. I was thinking, “Lord, how are we going to tell the Truth to these people? They have a whole denomination that believes this way.”

Later as we were praying for them, the Lord started giving us Bible verses. One of the verses was about the Baptism of Jesus. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came on Him and was visible in the form of a Dove. The Father’s Voice spoke from Heaven, “This is My Beloved Son.” (Luke 3:22-23; Matthew 3: 16-17) (RSVCE) So the next day, we shared the story of the Baptism of Jesus. We asked the pastor, “What was happening at the Baptism of Jesus. These words that were coming from Heaven, was that Jesus talking to Himself? Was Jesus being a ventriloquist?” We shared some other Bibles verses.

Then we asked him, “Why don’t you pray again about this point that you believe - about *Jesus Only*. Maybe God is giving us a bigger revelation of Who He is - Three Persons in One God - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?” We had been praying for him and he seemed receptive to the suggestion. He was willing to think about this. So we prayed that the Lord would work in his life to bring revelation and correction into the Truth - and that they would learn to read the Bible in context instead of focusing on one line.



Second: The Holy Bible points to Jesus. It is also God’s revelation of how He wants us to think and live to be like His Son. Therefore, the Holy Bible is an excellent external measure for spiritual discernment of our experience.

I remember what someone once said, “Do not interpret the Bible but let the Bible interpret you.” As St. Paul wrote to Timothy,

“All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be upright. This is how someone who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work.” (2 Timothy 3: 16-17)
(JB)

Whatever experiences we have, we can test them out against the Bible. Somebody in the Bible has been through what we are experiencing. And we can tell from the Holy Bible if our experience is good or bad, what fruits we can expect, and what God wants us to do with our experiences. It is all there. This is important for our spiritual life. We can test our spiritual life against the Holy Bible.

The word “discern” comes from a Latin word that means to distinguish, separate, sift, set apart, divide, or distinguish. To discern, spiritually speaking, is to distinguish or sort out what is of God, and what is of the flesh, the world, or the devil. The Holy Bible can do this dividing.

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s Sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the Eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4: 12 - 13) (NRSVCE)

When we pray for others, the Lord might remind us of Bible verses or stories. Through these, the Holy Spirit can guide us in how to understand others from His Point of View. The Word of God can reveal how God wants to come to others, how to think of their situations, and how to pray for them according to God’s Will. The Lord can also confirm to us about what is from Him or what is not. Thus, He can show us how to think and deal with everything through the Word of God. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would remind us of all He has said to us. (cf. John 14: 26) This is important for both our personal life and for intercession.

What Jesus has said to us is written in the Holy Bible. So we need to read the Holy Bible so that the Holy Spirit has something to remind us about. Then we can work with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Bible in spiritual discernment.



2. THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

The teachings of the Catholic Church are a very anointed measuring stick for eternal discernment. When we think of the teachings of the Catholic Church, we might think of huge volumes of knowledge and even libraries that we have to study to use for discernment. But actually the teaching of the Church and our faith is summarized in the Apostle's Creed. Almost all the main points we believe are right there in the Creed. The whole Faith is summarized. So if we are in a group receiving some teachings and they don't sound right, we can compare what we hear with the Apostles Creed. If something we hear people say does not agree with the Creed, we need to ask the question "Where is that teaching coming from?" Our discernment is working here as we have questions. And the teachings of the Church can help us verify or test out what we hear to see if it is from God.

The Catholic Church has also given us a wonderful new catechism that helps us catch the main teachings of the Christian Faith. Perhaps some of you have studied this in various groups in your parishes. In FBB, we have the FBB Bible Formation Course as a main formation program for intercessors. ^[2] In it we cover the entire Holy Bible and the fourth section of the Catechism, which is all on prayer, and mostly on intercession. The Catechism is so anointed. We can read one line and be in prayer for hours about it. It has many Bible verses in it that give us revelation and confirm the teaching of the Truth of the Faith. It is such a beautiful gift from God. When we read it, it can be a resource for us for objective discernment of the Truth.



[2]

3. THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Body of Christ is an amazing Gift from the Holy Spirit to help us in external discernment. From the beginning of Christianity, people have misunderstood the Holy Spirit - about Who He is and how He works. The result has been various divisions in the Body of Christ. Most divisions among the denominations, seem to do with something about the Holy Spirit, in terms of the meaning of the Body of Christ and how she works, the meaning of the Church, the Sacraments, even about interpretations of the Holy Bible. All of these are actually Gifts from the Holy Spirit and we need them all.

The Holy Spirit does not cause the division. But people's many different interpretations have caused division in the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit has been working deeply for many years now through our Holy Fathers and leaders of many Christian Denominations to try to put the Body of Christ back together again. He desperately wants to fulfil the Prayer of Jesus,

“Father, may they be one as We are one, may they be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me.” (John 17 21-22)
(JB)

The Prayer of Jesus in John 17 is an urgent and serious prayer for us in intercession.

The Body of Christ is a resource for us for external discernment in many ways.

First: God has given certain people in the Body of Christ a special authority to discern the truth. Our Holy Father and our Bishops, when they are in communion with the Holy Father, have a special spiritual authority and anointing and gift of discernment from God to recognize and define the Truth. That includes defining Who God is and how to interpret the Holy Bible. They also have a special responsibility to guard that Truth. Down through the centuries, God has revealed to us the true

teachings of the Faith through them in what we call the Magisterium the Catholic Church.

There is a difference between having the authority to discern and define the truth and being a theologian. Sometimes when priests or people are preaching, they get off on all kinds of ideas and start theologizing. It is all speculation - their ideas about God. This is not the same as the revelation of Truth. It is their thinking about the Truth. And sometimes, they can be very wrong in interpreting the Holy Bible and have ideas that are not the Truth.

In the Body of Christ, God has given us specially anointed people who can guide us to rightly discern what the Truth is. God gave them their special anointing to discern and safeguard the Truth about God, about the revelation of Jesus Christ, and about the right interpretation of the Bible. This anointing was first specifically given to *Peter* by Jesus Himself. (cf. Matthew 16:18; John 21:17) And it has been passed down through the Office of the Holy Father, who is Peter, the Vicar of Christ, today for us. God has given a special kind of authority to the Holy Father and the Bishops in communion with him, to discern and the guard and define Who God is and interpret what God means in the Bible - what the Truth is.

One of the points of division between Catholics and Protestants is the place of the Holy Father in the Body of Christ and the importance of spiritual authority for the discernment of truth. During recent years, God has been giving revelation to many non-Catholic people on the need to have more objective standards of the Truth.

Over the years the Lord has been revealing to the leaders of different Protestant groups that they should not be off by themselves. They need other pastors to discern their teaching to be sure it is Biblical and on the right track. Some are submitting their teachings to other pastors for discernment. God has been bringing these people into discipleship groups and programs, helping them understand that you cannot do it alone as a Christian. You cannot be a shepherd alone. You have to be part of a team, a body, a group for the process of discernment of Truth.

The Lord sovereignly is doing this, giving people in their experience the reality of why we need the Holy Father and why we need the Magisterium of the Church. The Holy Spirit is moving them toward the Gift He has given in the Teaching Authority of the Catholic Church and place of Our Holy Father to help them come into the fullness of the Truth. Some are even being drawn back or coming into the Catholic Church. Isn't it wonderful! We keep praying for this home coming for all. God is going to have one family when He gets done, under the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Chief Bishop and Shepherd of souls. (cf. 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4) Glory to God!

Second: There is another kind of spiritual authority that is given to people who are in *spiritual leadership* or are *spiritual directors* for a community or prayer group or different spiritual ministries. These people receive a special grace of discernment for those they serve. It does not mean that they have discernment for everything. They are not God in our lives. A spiritual director may have one special gift for us for a certain time in our life. God will work on that line through them to help us grow closer to the Lord, to discern our spiritual experiences and His Holy Will. I pray that each one can find some good spiritual directors. We need people to help us come closer to the Lord.



Many years ago, I had an interesting experience while I was living in a covenant community. I stayed with a family who had four children. That community was very strong on submission to authority of the father as the head of the house. That was fine with me. So I was in submission to the father and the mother because they had authority in that household. I would go to them to help me in discerning things. They couldn't believe it was happening! Here is a Sister asking us to help her make a decision and discern what it is from God! They were a young couple. But it was amazing to watch God work. And God did speak to me through them. They did not have discernment about everything in my life. I also had a spiritual director in that place. But God did work through them. Alleluia! This proved to an opportunity for them also to grow in the Lord because they had never had the responsibility to discern someone else's life. The

Lord was preparing them, as later on they were called to take pastoral leadership in their community! God does give people who have spiritual authority and leadership gifts for the purpose of discernment of the people they are serving. Glory to Jesus!



Third: Another way the Holy Spirit can work through Body of Christ in discernment is what we call the *witness of the Holy Spirit*. When we are born again in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our spirits. There He can confirm or bear witness or testify to our external experiences.

For example, maybe one day someone comes over to talk to you. And they say, “I was praying and this is what the Lord said to me.” As they tell you what the Lord showed them, you both experience a “Yes!” inside of you, a “Yes, that’s right!” spiritual feeling. You know it is God. You have this joy and you just know what they say is right and it is from God. And you both get so happy about it. This is called the witness of the Spirit. We also call it a confirmation that the Holy Spirit gives. It’s like their Holy Spirit reflects and mirrors your Holy Spirit, and then you both experience a big “Yes that’s God” reaction. This becomes the *witness of the Holy Spirit*.

There still might be another time when somebody comes and starts talking to you about problems. This time you might feel, “Oh, I don’t think I want to listen to this.” You just don’t want to hear it. Or maybe you go somewhere. And as you enter the place, you feel this big negative feeling and you just want to get out of there as fast as you can. This is discernment working. This is another kind of witness of the Holy Spirit.

When we get a negative witness like this, we need to stop and ask the Lord, what does this mean? What do you want me to do? We need other gifts from the Holy Spirit, like wisdom and understanding from God for the spiritual discernment. We cannot presume to know what our discernments mean. Maybe God is saying, “Something is wrong here. These people need prayer.” Or maybe He is saying, “You do not belong

here. You need to leave.” The Gifts of the Holy Spirit work together in such a case with discernment so we can understand what God is speaking to us and what He wants us to do.

Sometimes wisdom and understanding for discernment can come through the Body of Christ from people we least expect. St Benedict wrote something very interesting about discernment with others in his Holy Rule. He wrote that in the discernment of community matters, they were always required to ask the discernment of the newest, youngest member. Interesting! Perhaps, normally, we would go to those who are older, with years of wisdom, who know the community. But that is not what he wrote in his rule. There is a very important point in his statement. Sometimes the newest, youngest ones are more spiritually free and open to God. They do not have so much spiritual baggage or preconceived ideas, or old patterns of thinking. So God may be able to speak to them more directly and clearly about a situation.

Another perspective on this is David in the Holy Bible. He could even hear God talking to him through his enemies. (cf. 2 Samuel 16: 5-13) Can we? There is wisdom for spiritual discernment here. God’s ways are not our ways. But God’s ways always work! Alleluia!



An important principle related to the witness of the Holy Spirit that the Lord has taught me, as I go as a missionary in many countries, is *Walk in the Light*. The enemy tries to hide things, but if we walk in the light, then we will be the Children of the Light. Then the Lord will be able to lead us in His ways. (cf. 1 John 1:7; John 12:36; John 8:12)

I have often seen God work according to this principle in spiritual discernment to both guide and protect me in such amazing ways. Especially, I encourage you to speak to those who have spiritual authority, talk to them. God will confirm. They might not even know us, but God can speak to us through them as we *walk in the light*. It’s really wonderful to *walk in the light*, a Gift the Holy Spirit gives us in the Body of Christ!

Fourth: In the Body of Christ, we also have the lives and written wisdom of the *Saints*. They have completed their journey through life and are now with Jesus in Heaven. The Wisdom that God has taught them can help us discern what is of God and what is not of God. In fact, in Religious Life we are taught that even seventy-five per cent of our spiritual direction comes from spiritual reading. God can speak to us through His Holy Ones of the Saints, the Body of Christ, the teachings of the Church, and the Holy Bible. In this way, He can guide us in spiritual discernment.

The saints also teach us how we grow in spiritual discernment: *come closer to the Lord*. The closer we come to God, the more sensitive we become to the Lord and the things of God. One Saint describes it like this: If the enemy is trying to come with some deception, it's like a thief climbing over the back wall in the middle of the night, bumping into all of the garbage cans. You know that something is not right out there. So the closer we come to God, the more sensitive we are to what is of God and what is not of God.

Fifth: I want to close this section on the Body of Christ in discernment with a very important practical principle for discernment. There is one clear sign we can have that we are in God's Will as we try to discern matters together. We find this sign mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. Peter, James, and the disciples were trying to decide what to do with all the pagans who were becoming Christians under Paul's ministry. There were questions about circumcision and the Mosaic Law. After they finished their process of prayerful discernment, they wrote the Gentile Christians a letter and said,

‘It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us ...’
(Acts 15: 28) (JB)

Isn't that interesting! They were all in one hundred per cent agreement – *in unity* with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they could speak with authority, with confidence, about their discernment of the Will of God in that case.

We can also experience what they did as we try to discern God's Will with others. This is a very clear and important measuring stick for spiritual discernment: *Are we one hundred per cent united in the Holy Spirit.* If we all agree in the Holy Spirit about something, then we can have confidence we are on the right track. And that kind of total unity is always a miracle!



One time when I was in Japan, I was with a community of contemplative Passionate sisters. They had to discern God's Will in terms of moving their monastery to another Diocese. They told me, "Sister, we prayed a long time about this and we all agreed *one hundred per cent.*" Twenty women agreeing *one hundred per cent!* That definitely is the Holy Spirit!

God can really work like this. In our groups, when we are trying to discern what God wants, we can take it to the Lord together. If after we pray and review everything and even one person does not agree - if even one person has a question - we did not pray long enough. We need to pray on it more. The Holy Spirit can bring us all into unity of mind and heart. He is really amazing! Where there is lack of total agreement, maybe we missed something God wanted to show us. And that is why one person still has a question. Maybe someone has to let go of something, and surrender their opinions and ideas to God, in order to open their spiritual eyes so they can really see what God wants. If all persevere in the prayer and process of discerning with the Holy Spirit, He can answer any questions and bring all into total agreement with Himself. And then we can have confidence that we are rightly discerning God's Will. Alleluia!



When it comes to personal discernment - internal discernment - there is one principle we need to remember. The ultimate discernment on issues rests in the Body of Christ - that means, outside of ourselves. We personally do not have the final say on discernment in a situation, because there is Objective Truth. This is the difference between Catholics and Protestants. I know many people who received some message from God and they take it as the final say on what to do. They even presume they immediately think they understand it and put their own interpretation on it. "I am going to believe this or do this! I don't care what anybody says!" They may end up really off God's track. God has given us protection in the Body of Christ. I really love the Holy Spirit and I am always amazed at how He works in the Body of Christ. He can confirm about our inspirations through other people in all kinds of ways. Then we can be more certain to know what is of God. He is very concerned that we know it is Him. He will always confirm.



4. ROOTS AND FRUITS

The Lord Jesus Himself gives us the next point for external discernment.
“*By their fruits you will know them.*”

“You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” (Matthew 7: 16-20) (NRSVCE)

ROOTS

In the spiritual realm there are two possibilities: either God or the devil. Therefore, “Roots” can come mainly from God or the devil.

We are human beings dealing with spiritual reality. So we need to think about the “roots” of our humanity in spiritual discernment. Each of us, by nature, is body, soul, and spirit. We are influenced by the spiritual world. So, every one of us can very easily be blessed or deceived about spiritual matters. Do you know why as human beings every one of us can be very easily deceived? Because we are human beings; and the deceiver, the devil and Satan, is a fallen angel. By nature, the devil is shrewd and stronger than we are. That is one fact. But the bigger fact which we sometimes forget is: Jesus is smarter and stronger than he is. And after His resurrection, Jesus was raised up to the Right Hand of God in Heaven far above the all the Hosts of Heaven. (cf. Hebrews 1) So we can hang on to Jesus and find victory, as well as right discernment in all spiritual matters.

Because the devil is shrewd and he is set on doing evil from his evil roots, he will keep trying to do everything he can to deceive us.

“Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”
(1 Peter 5:8) (RSVCE)

The devil masquerades as an “angel of light”. (2 Corinthians 11:14) He will try to lure us away from the Lord by making evil things look good. He will try to draw us on with that “good” into the bondage. Once we experience the Lord Jesus and God’s real Goodness and Love, His Light enables us to see evil as it really is. And then, we no longer even desire anything that “appears good.” Moreover, the Presence of God’s Light can protect us and will drive out all darkness. (cf. John 1: 4-5)

But then the devil changes his tactics. He tries to get us caught in good things so the good things begin to take the place of God in our lives. I call this the Judo tactic of the enemy. Do you what Judo is? Judo is a martial art that was created in Japan. I don’t recommend or promote Judo because it is part of a pagan system, part of the enemy’s system. But we can learn from it about the enemy’s tactics. Judo in practice means, you throw someone who attacks you in the direction they are going. Spiritually it can work like this in our lives. Let’s say, one day we are helping some other people, which is a good thing to do. However as the day goes on, we keep helping one, and then another, and then another. Finally we come to the end of our day, and we never had any time to pray or to be with the Lord. So that day the enemy “threw us in the direction we were going”: of doing good things which displaced God. And we missed God.

PSALM 23

For those who are in Jesus Christ, Almighty God is Our Father - our Good Root. We need to better understand Him and His Providential Care for us as we think of *roots*. *We are rooted in Him!* “*Rooted and grounded in God Who is Love.*” (cf. Ephesians 3:14) Psalm 23 is great revelation of how God as our Father cares for us out of His Divine Love,

as a Good Shepherd. This Psalm speaks of the main basic human needs that He provides for.

“Yahweh is my Shepherd, I lack nothing.
In grassy meadows He lets me lie.
By tranquil streams He leads me to restore my spirit.
He guides me in paths of saving justice (righteousness) as
befits His Name.
Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death I should fear
no danger, for You are at my side.
Your Staff (rod) and Your Crook (staff) are there
to soothe (comfort, guide) me.
You prepare a table for me under the eyes of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup brims over.
Kindness and faithful love pursue me every day of my life.
I make my home in the House of Yahweh for all time to
come.” (Psalm 23: 1-6) (JB)

I will not go into all the details with specific verses in Psalm 23. However I will just give you a summary. God as our Father gives us life. He gives purpose to our lives. He provides whatever we need to live those lives – His Provision. He protects us. He even gives us a banquet in the presence of our enemies. He gives us healing. He guides us. He gives us a share in the Mission of Jesus to build His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven. He gives us anointing of the Holy Spirit to carry out that mission. And He promises Good Fruit, His Divine Holy Spirit Fruit, from faithfulness to Him; and Eternal Life with Him forever. These are the wonderful ways God cares for us as Father.

FBB - HOLY TRINITY RETREAT

Sometime with Psalm 23, do a little mini-retreat with the Holy Trinity for three hours. Take one hour and read Psalm 23 and see what it means that the Father is your Shepherd. The second hour, take Psalm 23 and read it like Jesus is your Shepherd. The third time, take Psalm 23 and

read it like the Holy Spirit is your Shepherd. Just walk with the Lord in that time. Thank God. Praise God. Worship God. See what He has done in your life; what He will show you. Give Him all the Glory. Alleluia!



What if people do not know the Father? There are a lot of people in all history and in all the world who do not know the Father and who do not know the Lord Jesus. In John's Gospel, the Lord Jesus said,

“I am the Way - No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 15:6) (JB)

The Lord Jesus is the One Who takes us to the Father. He is the only Way to go to the Father. So if people do not know Jesus, then they don't know the Father or how to go to Him for their needs. So what happens? As human beings we still have to take care of all the basic things I mentioned above: life, protection, provision, healing, guidance, purpose in life. All of these needs are basic for all humanity!

Our Father's Providential Care can provide for all these needs. However, if we don't know the Father, and we don't know how to go to the Father, we still have the needs. So there is a spiritual and natural gap in our lives. The enemy will try to come in with his counterfeits to fill the gap. One way he has tried to do this is by “inspiring” men to create religions that draw on his evil power and lead men to worship the creatures instead of the Creator. When we look at all the religions of the world that are not Christian, we will find that they all try to meet these basic needs of humanity in different ways by drawing on spiritual power that is not from the True God through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

For example, every religion of the world has something about healing – like shamans or curanderos. There are the healing people who use various healing rituals and objects to try to make healing. Then, these religions also have people and rituals and things they use to try to get spiritual guidance. For example: fortune tellers, astrologers, and the mediums. The same is true for protection. People are given objects used

in an occult ritual to put around their house for “protection” – like, ojo de dios (the eye of God). In all of these religions, people use rituals and practices and objects which we can call the counterfeit gifts, sacraments, and the sacramental system of the enemy. Many of these are part of what is today called the *New Age Religion*.

God has given us the Truth in Jesus Christ. He has given us many gifts and the Sacraments and a sacramental system through the Holy Spirit. These are God’s Way to relate to us, to care for us, and to lead us to all that He has made us to be. What the devil has been doing is to trying to counterfeit whatever is of God to take us away from Jesus. And he has counterfeited almost everything. However, there is only one thing the devil can never counterfeit. He can never counterfeit the Peace of Jesus Christ because Jesus IS Peace. Alleluia!(cf. Micah 5:5; Ephesians 2:14; Romans 5:1) That is Who He is! He IS Peace! Every Gift God gives us is filled with that Peace - the Presence of Jesus. And God’s Gifts bring that Peace as a fruit also.

So, for the purpose of spiritual discernment, if we discern the Presence of Jesus when someone is ministering or sharing with us spiritual things, and if the Peace of Jesus is in there, during and after as a fruit of the experience, then we can have a confidence in our hearts that somehow this is from God. There might be other methods we need to use for deeper discernment and to test our experiences. But if the Peace of Jesus is present, we can have a basic confidence that this is of God. The Peace of Jesus is both a Good Root and a Good Fruit of His Presence. Thank You, Lord Jesus!



FRUITS

Fruits come from roots. They also reveal if the roots are good or bad. This kind of discernment refers to what happens as a result of the revelations or experiences that we have or teachings we receive. What is the fruit of it? Fruit is something that grows from a tree. A good tree

brings good fruit. If the tree is from God, then what is the fruit that follows? If the tree is evil, what is the fruit that will follow?

“Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

“By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5: 16-25) (NRSVCE)

Another way we can test for the fruits in discernment is to ask the question: Where is this revelation or experience leading us? Is it leading us closer to Jesus or farther away from Him to ourselves or to evil? And if we are attending some ministry meeting we can ask: Who is the main focus of this ministry? Who gets the Glory?

Various Saints in the Catholic Church, like St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, have given us principles to apply in discerning what is of God and not of God. St. Ignatius Loyola developed a whole system of discernment to use in seeking God’s Will based on the principle of what is the Greater Good. “All for the Greater Glory of God” was his goal and the goal of his discernment. His principles are a combination of internal and external discernment. At the end of this book we have listed some of his principles.



As we talk about roots and fruits, we specifically mentioned some New Age experiences. To test these experiences, we can apply the discernment principle of: *where is it leading us*; and *who gets the Glory*? We can test our experiences by checking where it leads us: closer to Jesus or away from Jesus? We can ask what the focus is and who gets the glory for what happens at these meeting? In the New Age realm, the focus is on self. “I make peace in myself.” “I heal myself.” The focus is “I”. The focus on self is the devil’s territory. Jesus didn’t talk like that. Jesus said we have to die to ourselves. Also if the glory in a situation goes to people, we should have lots of questions. Where are they coming from? However, if Jesus is the focus and Jesus gets the glory at a meeting, then we can have confidence in our hearts that this meeting may be of God. The Lord is here.

What the devil does is try to counterfeit God’s Work and Gifts. The Presence and the Peace of Jesus Christ is the main signal for discernment on what is of God. We need the Holy Spirit to help us, for revelation to help us understand more deeply Who Jesus is, and how we can come to Him. How do we pray? How do we receive all this care that the Father has for us? God is a Good Father. He only wants good for us. We can trust Him in all things. The Holy Spirit will help us.

I really want you to be rooted in Jesus; and assure you that everything we need is in Jesus Christ. It is really true! *Everything we need is in God*. We don’t have to go spiritual shopping into the devil’s camp. We can just go to the Lord. He has more than we can ask for or imagine. St. Paul encourages us to fill our minds with everything that is good and holy, pure and true and righteous. (cf. Philippians 4: 8) Put on the Mind of Jesus Christ. The more we are in Jesus, the more brightly the Lord’s light shines in us. Then we will be better able to discern what is of God and what is not of God. We will know the Truth and the truth will set us free. Alleluia! (cf. John 8:32) In this way, we build on the good, solid foundation of Jesus Christ. We stand in Him and are safe from all deception and harm. (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15) In the end, we bring great Glory to God!

II. DISCERNMENT FOR INTERCESSION

We have been studying some basic principles on using internal and external measuring sticks in ordinary spiritual discernment. Now we turn to look at discernment in intercession. How do we discern experiences and situations when we are in intercession?

A. PRINCIPLES OF THE LIGHT

Several points of discernment in intercession are part of what we can call *Principles of Light*.

In the natural realm, when we turn the light on, we can see everything around us. And the brighter the light, the more clearly everything around is visible. In intercession, we invite the Lord Jesus to come in, Who is the Light of the world (cf. John 8:12), and the Light that enlightens the minds of men.(John 1:9) The Light of Jesus is a Divine and Spiritual Light. How does the Light of Jesus work in intercession?

First: The Light of God brings revelation. The Light of Christ reveals whatever is hidden. We begin to see others and their situations as the Lord sees them. This is really crucial for us in intercession, that we can see as the Lord sees, in order to work more truly with Him in intercession. And the revelation can come not only to intercessors, but also to those we pray for.



One example how this works is in the Covenant of Praise, Psalm 81. The Lord promises that as we praise Him, He will reveal and free us from our false gods and sin by His Presence. Praise and worship creates God's atmosphere. In this atmosphere, God's Presence and Light can be welcomed by intercession into the lives of those for whom we pray.

One time we had a wonderful experience of this covenant promise of conviction and liberation from sin for someone for whom we were praying. I was in a particular city for three months of intercession study

and work. During this time, the Lord had led me to pray together with three ladies for their husbands. We offered everything in our lives to God as intercession for the husbands - so that everything we did was a prayer for them. We also met once a week at a different home for about one to two hours to praise the Lord and seek Him on how to pray more deeply in intercession. We really praised the Lord Jesus a lot in those meetings.

One morning, about six weeks into the mission, one of the ladies came running over to see me. She said, “Sister, I just have to tell you what Brian said this morning.” I said, ‘Praise Jesus! What is the Lord doing now?’ She said, “This morning Brian came out for breakfast and he said, “I just hate to go over there to work. All they do is get me in trouble.” Well, in his work, Bran was getting and selling drugs. What had happened? As we were praising the Lord in his house, the Light of the Lord Jesus began to shine more brightly in his life and he began to see his situation at work as it really is, from God’s viewpoint. He didn’t like what he saw and he wanted out. Now isn’t that the first step to repentance - that you don’t like the condition you are in and you want to change? Praise Jesus! The Lord was answering our praise and worship intercession and executing His Covenant of Praise with the Grace of Revelation.

At the end of the three months, Brian lost his job, and he saw this as the Hand of God. However, because he was so involved in the mafia, he had to leave his house as protection for his family. But God gave him a Christian family to live with who could help him get his life in order with the God. Praise the Lord! He is faithful! Alleluia!!!



Second: The Light of God causes what is not of God to manifest. When we pray for others, did you ever notice that sometimes things get worse in their situation? Why does it get worse? Maybe we think, “Lord, You are not answering my prayers! Everything is just worse.” What is happening?

Remember, we just said that in praise and worship, the Lord Jesus, who is the Light of the world, comes closer to us and our people. His Light shines more and more brightly as we praise and worship Him. As the Divine Light of Jesus shines into the lives and situations of those we pray for, whatever is not of God is revealed. The hidden has to become visible. We begin to see things as God sees them. However, also, whatever is not of God has to manifest itself. (cf. Mark 4:22; Daniel 2:22) So if we are praying for others, and the situation starts getting worse, thank the Lord that He is working here. He actually is answering our prayers. But why does the Lord allow things to get worse? Why does He cause evil to manifest itself. What is really happening?

In intercession, we can pray for God to bless people and give them the Gift of Faith and fill them with His Love and many other blessings. But when it comes down to the last step, they have to make their own decision. They have free will. They have to accept what God wants to give them. We cannot just pray God's Graces into people and change their lives. God does not work that way. He respects their decision. They have to say "Yes" to God for themselves in order to receive all He wants to give.

Sometimes, people do not say 'Yes' to Jesus in response for the many blessings He gives from intercession. As we keep on praying for them, the Light of Christ gets brighter and brighter in their lives. What is not of God becomes more and more clear. What is evil has to manifest itself. Because the Lord has moved closer, they may experience the consequences of their sin and the consequences of their wrong decisions. Things really get worse and worse. Until they cry out, "Help! I can't take it!" What does that mean? It means they are calling on the Name of Jesus! The Name of Jesus means "Help" or "the One Who saves"! So their cry for help just opened the door to God! They just made the decision to open the door by crying, "Help!"

This is a point for intercession discernment according to the Principles of Light. If things are getting worse when you pray, give Glory to God. You are on the right track and He is working more intensely. But keep on praying! Ask the Lord how to pray for the next step. Maybe we can

pray that the Lord helps them change “Help” into a “Yes” to God and open up to receive Him. We can pray.

“Come Holy Spirit. Give them both the desire and the ability or power to do what is pleasing to God. (cf. Philippians 2:13) I believe and receive all Your graces on their behalf in the Name of Jesus. I speak in their place with Mary Our Mother, ‘Let it be done to (us) Lord according to Your Will.’(cf. Luke 1: 38) And I speak in their place with Jesus the Lord, “YES. Not my Will but Your Will be done’.” (cf. Luke 22:42) So Principles of Light can help us in our discernment for intercession.



B. STRAIGHT WITH CROOKED LINES

God writes straight with crooked lines is another principle for discernment in intercession. Many have quoted this proverb - attributed to a 16th century Portuguese Bishop. God actually does this in different ways.

First: Remove the ground the enemy stands on.

One time I went to see a priest who has a tremendous deliverance ministry.

This priest prays for deliverance with people who are high priests in Satanism and involved in the occult at high levels of evil. He works with very serious cases. I asked him, “Father, when we get into intercession for the Church and for our nations, we sometimes have to deal with very heavy spiritual warfare. What has the Lord taught you that can help our intercession? He said, “Sister, the main point that the Lord has taught me for deliverance ministry is to first *remove the ground the enemy stands on*. So God has taught me to pray for inner healing with people and confession rather than first focusing on spiritual warfare and direct deliverance. In this way, the Holy Spirit can help people shut whatever door was opened spiritually to let the enemy in. Then when the enemy leaves, he doesn’t have any way to get back in.”

What the Lord taught Father is very important wisdom for us in intercession. This is God *writing straight with crooked lines*. By the decisions we make, by sin, or whatever we do against God, we give the devil a legal right or legal permission to come in. This is a legal situation in the spirit. If the devil is there legally, we cannot effectively tell him to leave. He has been legally invited in. So, how do we deal with this?

We need to return the territory to the Lord; put it under its rightful Owner; legally make the transfer to the King of kings. Maybe forgiveness is needed; or repentance; or the Sacrament of Confession; or a new or even first time dedication to God; or reversing decisions made against God. Maybe curses that bind up people or situations need to be broken. The Holy Spirit can reveal the source of the problems and show us how to pray to “cut out the root” of the problem. Then the “tree” of the problem will die. People will be set free from the spiritual bondage of the enemy and be able to go into all God has for them.



Some of you may be familiar with the special Family Tree Masses for inner healing or for healing of the family history. In FBB we are also doing these Special Masses in intercession for the healing of the history of the spiritual family of the Church. All of us receive an inheritance on every level from those who have gone before us. You know how children can look like their parents. They even act like them because of psychological inheritance. But they also have a spiritual inheritance. Even whole groups and places can have a good or bad spiritual inheritance from those who went before them. God speaks about this in the Bible. For example, the effects of sin and curses can pass down for generations. People that practice idolatry put a curse on ten generations. Immorality, broken covenants, and the killing of innocent life, puts curses on generations and even on the land.

Christian ministers and Christian psychologists, like Dr. Kenneth McCall and Father John Hampsch, C.M.F., have done serious studies on generational healing in the Bible and in their ministries. As a psychologist, Dr. McCall had people coming to him who were mentally

ill and he could not help them. Because he was a Christian, he went to the Lord. The Lord showed him that something had happened in the family history, and the consequences of it were falling down on that person. In one case, there was an abortion way back and the person today was experiencing the consequences of what happened in their family line. So they became mentally ill. This was a spiritual inheritance of a generational curse. The doctor asked God, "What am I supposed to do?" The Lord said, "There needs to be forgiveness and a Mass offered for that baby that was aborted, and commend the baby to the Lord. There needs to be a healing of the history." The Lord showed him different steps to take. He took the steps and the person was completely healed. The mental illness was an intercession issue. Alleluia!

Maybe there is something in the family line or in the lives of the people for which we need to pray. Perhaps they can't get free of something. There may even be some patterns of thinking and acting in your own family that has you in bondage and you can't get out of it. It could be that here is an intercession issue of generational healing. The special intercession Masses for the healing of the family history can help set us and our people free to be what God wants us to be now.

As I mentioned, in FBB, God has us praying in intercession in different countries to deal with consequences of sin in the history of the Church that has carried down through the generations to the present. There are things for which the Church has to ask forgiveness. Maybe, when missionaries came to a country and brought the faith, the soldiers and the people who were opportunists, came with them, and wanted to get money from the native peoples. So the founding of the Faith there was surrounded with a kind of negative cloud of violence and corruption. That spiritual cloud passes down through the generations and affects people today. By intercessory prayer, we can go back and clean up the history, and set people free from the effects of what happened in the past.

In many nations, we are using the Mass for Healing the History of the Church. Research of history can uncover what points of history are carried down and affecting our people today, blocking them from becoming what God wants them to be. As we deal with these issues in

that intercession, God is writing straight with crooked lines. As the legal rights the enemy stands on are removed, God can fill His People with a new anointing of His Presence and Glory. The enemy has to leave. Strongholds of evil are broken. And the Holy Spirit Himself executes God's Divine Law of "overcoming and replacing evil with good". (cf. Romans 12:21) This is an example of God writing straight with crooked lines.

Second: Put God first not the problems.

Here is another way God writes straight with crooked lines. When we pray in intercession, we usually start out in praise and worship, and place God first, not the problems. Then we ask the Lord, "How do You see this situation? And how do You want us to pray?" As we continue to praise and worship the Lord, instead of telling Him the problems, we seek the Lord and the answers He wants to give. God Himself then goes into action. The Lord Himself works on the people as we focus on Him. This is writing straight with crooked lines in intercession. We go to God. God goes to the people. Alleluia!

Third: Pray what God sees, not what we see.

Another way this principle works is: When we pray and ask the Holy Spirit how to pray, He may lead us to pray in some manner that is different than our thinking about the situation. God ways are *not* our ways! (cf. Isaiah 55:8) But God's ways work! Perhaps what we see is not the root of the situation or it is only a small part of a larger situation, or it is the consequence of something else. The real need may be quite different than what we see. As we obey and pray for what the Holy Spirit sees and tells us, God may do the work and much more than we can see. In this way, He can write straight with crooked lines! Alleluia!

C. GOD WORKS IN STEPS

God works in steps and stages in people's lives. This important reality can directly affect our discernment process.

The Holy Bible and the writings of the Saints, like St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and St. Francis of Assisi, reveal that the Holy Spirit takes us all through different stages of growth and transformation in the spiritual life.. The main stages of this process include: purification (from evil into good); illumination (from natural to spiritual experience); union with God (from spiritual experience to God); and incarnation (where God begins to live out His Life in us.) The Holy Spirit takes us through these phases in every area of our lives at different times. That means everyone can be at a different phase in each area of their lives and at different times of their lives. This also means that we all need a LOT of a special kind of Love which *gives people room to grow and change.*

There are many things we can say about what can happen and how we go with the Holy Spirit on this spiritual journey. But for this study on spiritual discernment and intercession, we just need to be reminded that the journey exists. Everyone on the journey is in a different phase or step at different times. And when they are at a particular step on the journey, we can pray for them one way. But then when they are on another step, we have to ask God how to pray for them on the new step. Different kinds of prayer are for different steps on the journey. Also, we need to remember that God works in a different way in each kind of prayer.

So, spiritual discernment is essential every time we pray for others. We have to learn to work with our Creative God and ask Him, “Lord, this is what I see in this situation. What do You see and what are You doing?” Only God really knows people and their situations and what He wants to do in their lives. We can communicate with God, and we can learn how to discern rightly and follow the Holy Spirit. Then God can tell us how to see people and their situations as He sees them, what to pray for and how to pray. Come, Holy Spirit!

D. BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

“Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.”
(Galatians 6:2) (NRSVCE)

And what is the Law of Christ?

“ Love one another as I have loved you.”
(John 13: 34-35; John 15:12) (NRSVCE)

“Bearing one another’s burdens” is an essential part of the Christian Life and work of an intercessor. But how does this relate to discernment for intercession? God can give us burdens. And if He does, the discernment process using this principle helps us understand when we need to pray, what we need to pray for, and how we are supposed to pray.

Let’s take an example. Perhaps you are an intercessor. And normally you are very happy and joyful as you go about your day doing your work. But then, suddenly you come under a heavy feeling which presses down on your mind and heart taking away all the joy. You start to feel all wiped out. Then you might get discouraged and depressed. So you call up one of your friends and ask them to pray with you for healing. Did you ever do this?

What is really happening here? Perhaps, the real situation is not that you need healing yourself. What maybe happening is: God sees everybody and He also sees all of His intercessors. Perhaps there is a person over there that has a big problem. They really need prayer right now. So the Lord looks around and says, “All right. Who can I ask to help here?” Then the Lord sees you. “OK. There’s Maggie. I am going to ask Maggie to help!” Then, Boom! He puts the problem of that person as a spiritual burden on Maggie. She did not realize God was going to do this. He just did it because as a committed intercessor, she was just always available. So she comes under this heaviness and thinks, “Oh, what happened? I was so happy and all of a sudden I am feeling so bad! I need to call for prayers for healing.” What happened is, God just gave

her an intercession burden. He is calling her to prayer for someone else and not for herself!

Whether the burdens we experience are a call to intercession for others or some personal problem which we have, we deal with both situations the same way. Whatever happens, we take it to Jesus first. We don't just take it as a personal situation. We take it to Jesus! We ask Him what He sees happening and what He wants us to do. If we are experiencing a personal situation, after we get the victory, we can always ask God to share that victory through intercession with others who have the same need as we did.

If we understand how God works with burdens, we will be able to have a better discernment of what is going on in our lives as intercessors when these things happen. I think I am going to make another special sign:

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONAL! TAKE IT TO JESUS!



E. IDENTIFICATION INTERCESSION

Identification intercession is in many places in the Holy Bible. This kind of intercession means that when we pray, we so identify with those we pray for, we actually began to live the experience of others. We speak in prayer of the conditions of others as if it is our own. This happened with Jesus on the Cross. He became sin. He was living the intercession for the salvation of sinners on the cross, even as He was praying all the time for sinners. (cf. Isaiah 53)

We see identification intercession in the Book of Daniel. In Daniel 9, Daniel goes to God in prayer for His People. This was a response to Jeremiah's prophecy about the 70 years of exile of the People of Israel and the promise of their restoration.

Daniel was a righteous man. The Lord called him , "beloved of the Lord". Yet as Daniel comes into intercession for his people, he identifies with them and cries out, "God, forgive *us*." He is identifying with the sins of his people as his own. He cries, "Forgive *us*. *We* have not kept Your covenant. *We* have sinned against You. *We* have not listened to Your voice. *We* have not obeyed the direction You have given *us* through the prophets." He keeps saying "us" and "we". He is identifying with the sins of his people.

Sometimes God invites us to identify deeply with those for whom we pray. He can do this with the gift of travailing prayer. We actually begin to feel the pain of other people. We begin to weep and cry to God on their behalf. Yes, we live it! It is not just a prayer that we say. We are living the intercession. As we live the intercession, we need to continue to pray until we experience a breakthrough into Peace. This Peace is the charismatic Gift of Faith for the situation.

God confirms the victory to us with the charismatic Gift of Faith so we know that we know all is ok and God is bringing His Victory now. Then we need to continue to pray more. Ask God to give others the Victory and the special Faith which He has given us to those for whom we are praying, so that they can receive His Miracles. Maybe some of you have

experienced travailing prayer. This is a form of identification intercession.

Praying in proxy for someone, however, is not the same thing as identification intercession. Praying in proxy is where you make the decision to literally stand in the place of someone else. And as others pray over us, we ask God to reach out through us to touch those we represent.

Identification intercession is much more than representing someone in proxy for prayer. God Himself calls us to identification intercession. And, He gives us special grace, so that we are so one with the other, that we pray their needs and burdens as our own. It is living the prayer, carrying the sins, sicknesses, and burdens of others as our own!

In effect, we share in the Priesthood of Jesus during identification intercession, by offering ourselves to God as a living sacrifice in intercession with the Son of God for others. This experience may be so deep that we actually become victims in intercession with The Victim, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross. As we join with Jesus on the Cross in this intercession, the Holy Spirit will reach out through us to apply the Victory of the Blood of Jesus on those for whom we pray. In our own person, we make the bridge between heaven and earth. This is identification intercession. Some beautiful definitions of the experience of identification intercession can be found in the words of St. Paul,

“No longer I live but Christ lives in me.” (Galatians 2:19-20)
(RSVCE)

And

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking* in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church.”
(Colossians 1: 24) JB



F. PROPHETIC INTERCESSION.

Prophetic Intercession really describes what happens in the New Intercession in the Spirit of Jesus. We are working with the Lord in intercession to bring God's Kingdom and God's Will --- Heaven --- into the earth. (cf. Matthew 6: 9-10) If we understand more the meaning of prophetic intercession, we can better discern what God wants to do and how to pray with Him.

In the Holy Bible, we can find many prophets of God. The main role of Biblical prophets was to be a spokesperson for God to people of their own time, and then, secondarily, to people of future generations. The prophets administered revelation from God about the providential working out of His Will and His Plan for His own People and for other nations. Sometimes that revelation spoke of God's hopes and dreams and promises. Sometimes God gave His view on a situation and the impending judgment caused by the consequences of sin and evil present there. A biblical scholar explained it like this:

“They (the prophets) provide interpretations—from God’s perspective—about past events, present circumstances, as well as future possibilities. Note that I say ‘*future possibilities*’ rather than ‘future events’, because when biblical prophets speak about the future, it is usually *not* about what *will* inevitably happen, but *rather* about what *might* happen, depending on how people choose to react and act: whether they listen to the prophetic message and live their lives accordingly, or ignore the words of the prophets and suffer the consequences.” [3]

Daniel understood that God works through His prophets in this way, especially *in revealing possibilities*. Thus, he discerned the deeper significance of God's words through the Prophet Jeremiah regarding the 70 years of exile of Israel in Babylon. God made a promise of restoration in the midst of His judgment of exile. As a result, God led

[3] Felix Just, S.J., “What is Biblical Prophecy?”

Daniel to respond by deep prophetic and identification intercession, opening the way for God to fulfill His promise of restoration.

Hebrews 11 speaks about how from the invisible world, the visible world came to be. (cf. Hebrews 11: 1-3) In the visible world, we may not see the answer. In the visible world, we may have no hope that negative circumstances will ever get resolved. We may even be really stuck in the circumstances. Subsequently, we believe we will never find any hope from our circumstances. But Real Hope only comes from God. In prophetic intercession we step into Heaven, even into something that does not exist yet, but it exists in God. He is the Creator. As we step into God and His perspective, we can work with Him to bring Heaven into the earth. That is the work of the prophet: to reveal and to represent God, to speak for God, to do what God would do, to bring the future into now. That is what it means to be a prophet. This is also what it means to be a prophetic intercessor.

In FBB intercession, we actively seek the Lord for how He sees a situation.

Perhaps He may show us that a disaster is about to happen. Then we earnestly seek His Counsel or Plan for that case and how to pray about it. In prophetic thinking, we need to be open to the fact that God's revelations to us on a current situation may be *about 'future possibilities' rather than 'future events'*. Just because He may show us impending disasters does not mean that this is His Will. Just because we see impending disasters around us, does not mean that situation is God's Plan or His Will for some disaster to actually happen.

Perhaps He wants us to pray to mitigate what we see, and turn it around into His Real Plan or Perfect Will. So, we always ask God, "How do You see this situation? For what can I hope? What do You want me to pray for? Jesus, what are You praying for in Heaven? How can we agree with You for the new creation You want to do here - to bring Heaven into the earth?" We seek always to be led by God and not circumstances.



One time I was in southern Japan, and a great typhoon was heading directly toward our city. We all began to pray. I asked the Lord, “Please can you make it change course. If the typhoon comes, everybody stays home and we cannot meet to do Your Work.” So as we continued to pray as the Holy Spirit led us, the typhoon made a 90 degree turn at the tip of Japan to travel due west and then another 90 degree turn so as to travel north up the sea between Japan and Korea. Glory to God!

That week was also the international rosary for peace initiated by the Holy Father. Akita, Japan was one of the shrines of Our Lady that was connected in the satellite transmission. So we all decided to go. At the same time, the typhoon was slowly moving north up the sea coast. It was scheduled to hit land at Akita at the time of the vigil, which would have caused the whole event to be cancelled. So again we all prayed as the Lord led us for the typhoon to dissipate as it hit land. And that is exactly what happened. Akita was spared and the rosary transmission went on with no problems. Glory to Jesus! God worked through intercession to mitigate the situation for His Glory.



The prophetic perspective about prayer is very important for right discernment in intercession. We need to remember that what we see or what God shows us may be only *possibilities based on the current situation* and not the final story. Therefore, we can be more open for God to lead us to new revelation and new ways to pray to change the situation into what He desires to have happen. So our discernment is not only focused on finding out what is of God and what is not of God now. But, our discernment focuses on what does not yet exist in a current situation and what God wants to happen in His Perfect Will. Then, we can work with the Holy Spirit through intercession to bring the future into now.



In FBB, we do a lot of prophetic intercession. Often God will give us prophetic missions of intercession for the international FBB pilgrimages

in different countries. He also does this for vigils or special prayer events in the Church. When He gives us a mission, He usually gives us a special Scriptural theme on what He wants to accomplish and a Scriptural prayer strategy for us to follow in intercession. As I already mentioned, this discernment is not so much about how to deal with current situations, but how to bring God's future dreams into now. God says to through the Prophet Amos,

“Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing His Secret (Counsel or Plan) to His Servants the prophets.”
(Amos 3:7) (NRSVCE)

As we obey the Holy Spirit in the mission, interceding according to His Strategy, we are spiritually opening Heaven in this place and prophetically bringing God's Heaven into earth. So the discernment reveals to us how to release the future Plans of God into now, rather than just dealing with current matters. And, as we obey the Lord for His Mission, He also does amazing miracles in the current situations of those for whom we pray.



GOD'S VISION FOR INDIA

Wherever the Lord leads me to specific place, I always ask Him, “Lord, why did You send me here now? What is it that You want to do?” This is working in Prophetic intercession. Ephesians says,

“We are God's work of art created in Christ Jesus to walk in the good things that He has prepared for us ahead of time.”
(Ephesians 2:10) (GNT)

This means that when God created us, He did more than just give us life. He also gave us a whole lifetime of good things. How many people know this and know that they can ask God for those good things?

Our Father in Heaven has this huge library in Heaven. In His Library, He has a book for everybody with their name on it. Every group, every family, every parish, every Diocese, and every nation has a book in His library. In each book, He has written down all of His plans - all those good things - He has prepared ahead of time for each one. Sometimes when the Lord takes me up into His Library, I have noticed that a lot of those books in God's Library have never been opened. People just do not know that Our Father has all these wonderful plans for them in a special book with their name His Library.

Did you know that you have a book in God's Library? And you can ask Him to take you up into His Library to see your book. I am inviting you now. Come on up and visit the Father's Library. Ask Him to show you your book. In it you will find His Will, His Plan, His Dream for you and your people, your family, your community, your Church, your nation. Come Holy Spirit, help us.

As I said, when I go to different countries or places to serve, I always ask the Father to take me up into His Library and reveal to me His Plans. Father, what do you want me to do for Your People. How can I serve in *this* place.

One time when I went to India, I said, "Lord, I really need to know what Your Will is. What is Your Plan? What is Your Vision for this mission? Why are we here? What are we supposed to pray for? I don't know what to do." So I prayed, "Father, I need to see what Your Plan for India is."

As I was praying, He took me up to His Library in Heaven. In His Library, God has a great big executive table. Around the table there is a chair for the Father, one for Jesus, and a chair for the Holy Spirit. Then He pulled up a little chair for me. On this day, He went over and got the book called "India" off the shelf. He opened the book to the first page. Now He only shows us a little at a time, not the whole book at once. That would be too much. One page is more than enough at one time.

As He opened the book, I saw the whole map of India on the page - alive and blazing on fire. I said, "Lord, what does this mean? Is this a good

fire - or a bad fire?" He said, "*This is the Fire of True Worship to the True and Living God.*" This is the Father's dream for India. Isn't that beautiful! Now there is lots of worship going on in India to all kinds of idols and creatures all the time. But the Father wants "*TRUE Worship to the True and Living God.*" That is God's dream. That is what God wants us to pray for in intercession for India. Alleluia!

Once God gives us the prophetic vision, we need to take another step in the discernment process and ask Him for His interpretation of the vision. Then we need to ask him for an intercession strategy or plan. How do we intercede so that His Vision happens? What does God want us to do?

As we asked the Lord on how to pray for His vision for India, He told us a number of things which He wanted us to do to accomplish His plan. One of the things He said is that, there are enough intercessors in India so that if they were to unite and focus their prayer, then He could set the whole Church on fire, and there would be faith enough for the whole nation.

The Lord gave us another word. As He looks across all the nations, He has a purpose for the different nations in His Kingdom. One of His purposes, special for India, is the call to be missionaries. He wants India to bring the Love of God the Father to the nations. This is part of God's Will for His People in India. Isn't that marvelous!

One way the Lord said to get that True Fire going is to start lighthouses of praise and worship in every parish with the young people. Invite the young people to have a couple of hours of strong praise and worship every week to lift up the Light of Christ. He said, "You lift Me up and I'll bring the people. But you lift Me up!" (John 12:32) Getting our young people once a week doing praise and worship! A lighthouse to lift up Jesus in every parish! Are you dreaming with me? Our young people can do this. They love music. They love to worship the Lord. He is not talking about evangelization. He is talking about worship, ministering unto the Lord, and the Lord will bring the people!

One day, I was talking to a Bishop in India who works with the young people. I shared with him the things the Lord was saying to us for India. Then I said to him “You work with young people. Have you taught them to be missionaries?” He said, “Well, we haven’t done that one yet.” I said, “Now is the time. You teach them how to be missionaries and we will see if we can get a lighthouse of praise and worship in every parish. Get the young people to be missionaries and watch God work.” The Bishop is working on it. Wouldn’t that be wonderful if that happened in every parish!

So this is God’s special dream and special gift for His People in India: to be “on Fire with True Worship to the True and Living God” and to be a missionary to take the Fire of the Love of God the Father to the nations. As we discern God’s Dreams, and how to pray them into existence, we can make the bridge between Heaven and earth in order to actualize all that He desires. This is a special Holy Spirit mission and work of intercession for India that is going on right now. And we are doing it step by step. Alleluia!



In prophetic intercession, as we seek God, He will help us understand how He sees current situations and also what He desires for the future. Our discernment for intercession and our Hope is based on God, not on circumstances or how we see circumstances or on what we want to happen. We are invited to work with the Holy Spirit to bring Heaven into earth for His Glory!

We have a saying as intercessors that catches the effect of prophetic intercession, “*As the Church is, so is the nation.*” Wow! If the Church knows its identity and knows how to go to the Throne of God in intercession, then the Church can keep a nation in God’s Order and God’s Peace.

The Church can also open up the way for a nation to fulfill its destiny from God. But if the Church does not know how to do this, then the Church is in a kind of spiritual chaos, and so the nation will also be in be

in chaos. I take that saying further and say, “*As the intercessors go, so goes the Church.*” In the face of all that is happening today, where are the intercessors?

Look at the story of Daniel. One man! Because of his prophetic intercession in Babylon, every king was converted to God and made a public confession and dedication of his kingdom to the Most High God of Israel as the True God. It was all due to the prayers of one man. As a result of his faithful prophetic intercession, the way opened up spiritually and physically for God to fulfil His Promises to bring Israel back to the Promised Land to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. Also, through the prophetic intercession of Daniel, God opened the way for the destiny of Israel to be fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah, the Son of Man. Jesus often referred to Himself by this title.

To be able to get into heaven, to catch God’s vision, and to work with the Lord in the new creation, this is what we are called to do in the new intercession! Everything Jesus did, even everything He is, never happened before! It is all a new creation! The prophetic dimension of intercession gives a new direction and expectation to spiritual discernment. We no longer only look at circumstances, we look at Jesus. We do not look at the problem and try to figure out what to pray for and do. We step into the prophetic position in Heaven, to look at God and what He wants to do, and work with Him to bring Heaven into earth.



G. STRONGHOLDS OF THE MIND

God revealed the work of prophets in His Call to Jeremiah. This is also a powerful prophetic intercession strategy:

“Then the Lord put out His Hand and touched my mouth and said to me: “There! I am putting My Words into your mouth. Look, today I am setting you over nations and over kingdoms, *to tear up and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.*” (Jeremiah 1: 9-10) (NRSVCE)

The points of God’s mission to Jeremiah have to do with natural and spiritual territories where God wanted him to work and what God wanted him to do as a prophet. For intercession, these are also natural and spiritual territories where God may call us to intercede and which can reveal to us how we are to pray. They are steps of a Divine Strategy that we can follow in intercession.

One of these steps - the *knocking or tearing down* - has to do with strongholds. The Hebrew language refers to actually knocking down structures or strongholds. These can be limited or negative strongholds of the mind, or mind sets in people, or also entire evil structures or systems in society. For discernment purposes, we can tell they are not of God by their fruits.

What is a **stronghold of the mind**? A stronghold of the mind is a positive or negative pattern or a way of thinking that we are stuck in. It is a way of thinking in which we view a situation in a limited or negative way that is not God’s way of thinking, with no hope that it could ever change. Even though we know the situation is wrong, we just accept it.

“A mind-set impregnated with hopelessness that causes the believer to accept as unchangeable, situations that we know are contrary to the will of God.” ^[6]

^[6] from Ed Silvano: cf. <https://www.generals.org/articles/single/empowering-women-breaking-strongholds-that-strangle-destiny>

Mindsets can become a psychological stronghold and also can become a spiritual stronghold. We can get mentally stuck in the condition of a psychological stronghold of the mind or limited, negative mindsets. Because these strongholds are not of God, they can become a spiritual door to evil. The enemy can send evil spirits into these psychological strongholds or of the patterns of thinking that are not of God, and take control of our lives through them. Then they become negative spiritual strongholds as well, and people now are in spiritual bondage.

Part of our work of intercession is to tear down the strongholds of patterns of thinking that are limited or are against the Will of God, and replace them with God's Plan and Will – with God's way of unlimited thinking. The prophetic intercession strategy which God gave Jeremiah includes the replacement steps of building and planting.

One way to spiritually *tear down and build up* is to execute the Word of God. We can declare and decree these Bible verses in intercession,

“Our war is not fought with weapons of flesh and blood (human nature) but our weapons are strong enough in God's cause to demolish fortresses, to demolish the strongholds, the archetypes (old ideas), the patterns of thinking (presumptuous notions) that are (set) against the (knowledge and) Will of God. (We bring every thought captive) Every thought is our prisoner, captured to be brought into obedience to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) (NRSVCE)

Here St. Paul refers to *demolishing fortresses or strongholds of the mind*. This Bible verse is a very strong spiritual weapon in intercession to destroy strongholds. By declaring it out loud in intercession into a situation of strongholds, we execute the Word of God. We command all ways of thinking, not of God, to come into submission to Jesus Christ. Then, we ask the Lord for His words to speak into the lives of these people, to replace the lies that they are living in or stuck in - with the thinking of Jesus Christ. Psalm 33 is an especially strong Word to decree here. We can declare:

“The Lord thwarts the plans of nations; He frustrates the intentions of peoples; but the Lord’s plans hold good forever, the intentions of His Heart from age to age.”(Ps 33:10-11)(JB)

Another way God can change mindsets is by shifting the focus of people through fresh revelation to take them beyond the obstacles and lies they have believed. ^[7] In intercession, we can pray for God to give His people new revelation; to change their focus into what God desires for specific situations. Jesus gave us a decree we can use for this in intercession,

“I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.” (Matthew 11: 25) (NIV)

As we make these decrees, we also need to declare, “We believe and receive the graces of revelation and change of mindsets and focus for our people in the Name of Jesus.” Then we speak for our people in the words of the Blessed Mother at the Annunciation, “Let it be done unto *us* according to Your Word.” (Luke 1: 38) (JB) Next, we repeat the Words of Jesus until we experience a spiritual break-through., “Not my will but Your Will be done.” (Luke 22: 42) (JB) By our “yes’ to God in union with the “Yes” of Jesus, we choose to release special Grace from Heaven to replace the decisions of “no” to God in the lives of our people. This releases Grace to help them open up and change to a ‘yes” to the unlimited hopes and expectations of God our Father. (cf. 2 Corinthians 1: 19-22; Ephesians 3:21-22)

God has plans and He is going to be sure they are accomplished! (cf. Isaiah 55: 8 - 11) These Bible verses and others the Holy Spirit may bring to our minds are powerful in intercession to tear down strongholds and replace them with God’s thinking - with His Truth – and His Unlimited Possibilities from Heaven. The Holy Bible becomes a Sword of the Holy Spirit to cut through and divide out what is of God and what is not of God and replace it with God’s Kingdom and God’s Will. Alleluia!

^[7] cf. http://elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=18876

H. AUTHORITY IN INTERCESSION

In intercession, we need to discern what spiritual authority we have to pray. This directly affects our spiritual protection and effectiveness in intercession.

SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY FOR INTERCESSION

One time I was in Africa giving training in the new intercession to various Religious Sisters there. We met together after the training for an intercession prayer meeting. After spent time praising and worshipping the Lord, I asked them if they had any special things that came to mind that we needed to pray for and lift up to the Lord.

One of them said, “I would really like to lift up the Bishop that I work for. He is an African Bishop and he has started to get into the African religions, which involves occult practices. I have no peace about it. We need to really pray for him. He is getting into some really evil things.” I said, “OK. We will ask the Lord.”

Someone else said, “I went to the market the other day. There were some Muslims there. I was humiliated and attacked by these people. I still really feel burdened by the whole experience. So I would like to pray for them.” I said, “OK. Let’s ask Jesus what to do.”

So we lifted these situations up to the Lord. The first thing the Lord said was “*Where does your authority lie?*” The Lord asked me, “*Where is your authority in these cases?*” The Lord was leading us into discernment.

In the second case, Sister did not know those Muslim people. And they did not know Jesus. She was hurt and offended, and was continually spiritually harassed by what they had done to her. But there was no other relationship with them. So, in that case the Lord said, “You do not have authority to pray for those people right now. You have to leave them to Me.” Just pray for the Sister to be free. The Lord led us to forgive them

with the Intercessor's Forgiveness Prayer. Then we cut off the curses that were put on the Sister through that situation. And she had peace.

In the first case, the sister was in *submission* to her Bishop. She was working for him. This gave her a position of spiritual authority for intercession - to pray deeply for her superior. The Lord led us to pray for the Bishop - step by step with different prayers. One prayer Sister prayed was the prayer to St. Michael by Pope Leo XIII for the Lord to set the Bishop free from any spiritual bondage and open the door to Jesus.

Normally, I would not just pray that strong prayer unless there was spiritual authority to do so and some kind of follow up. Since Sister was working for the Bishop, she could keep follow up and keep praying for him. She could pray to protect him from the enemy until he could come to an understanding or a commitment or whatever he needed to do to stay free. So, we were able to intercede very deeply for him.

Some of this intercession involved serious spiritual warfare. As I already mentioned, normally I would not pray on that level for others unless there was spiritual authority for me to do it, and there was some way to follow-up. I remember what Jesus said about the man that got delivered from an evil spirit. That evil spirit went out looking for a place to live. He came back to the man and he found the place was clean but empty! Spiritually, there was nothing there! So the evil spirit went out and got seven more spirits. Then the second state of the man was worse than the first! (cf. Matthew 12: 43-45)

We do have authority in the Name of Jesus to bind the enemy and to cast out evil spirits. We have an authority in Jesus to do this, but we have to be wise in the Lord for spiritual warfare prayer and obey the Holy Spirit. Also, we can cast out all the spirits we want, but if that person is not protected and they don't know what happened, how are they going to stay free? It takes a commitment to follow up and to protect them until they can understand what is happening and come to Jesus themselves; and God has to call us to both the prayer for them and the follow-up.

In the story I just told you, the Sister who prayed for her Bishop had authority for deep prayer because of her *submission*. The other Sister did not even know the people she asked to pray about. She had no relationship. So the Lord told us to just give the people to Him.

Submission is the key to Jesus victory and power on the cross. The Lord Jesus submitted in everything in obedience to God. He submitted to becoming a man. He submitted to becoming sin on the cross. He submitted to death. He submitted to the devil taking Him into hell. But there was no legal place in Jesus that the devil could hold onto, no legal position. The devil had broken God's law and taken a righteous man into hell, so he lost everything. The devil could not hold Him! Jesus got the keys to death and hell. And Jesus was raised from the dead even up to the Right Hand of God the Father in Highest Heaven. Alleluia! The Authority and Power of the intercession of Jesus and His Victory came directly from the Authority and Power of God the Father through the submission of the Lord Jesus. Glory to God!

The Lord has taught us this principle of submission to spiritual authority in FBB ministry. Whenever I go to any Arch/diocese, I always report first to the Arch/ Bishop to have his permission and blessing to minister in that place. This submission in obedience is the normal way we work in the Kingdom of God and in the Catholic Church. The Arch/ Bishop's permission and blessing gives me spiritual protection and spiritual authority to intercede deeply for the Church in that place. Also, God gives special graces of discernment, wisdom, and anointing so that we can really pray deeply and effectively in that Arch/diocese. I also do the same when I go to the parishes. I have asked you always to do this also. I go to the parish priest, or to the priest who was representing him there, to ask his blessing and intentions to serve in his parish. The same is true when praying for various communities or groups or ministries. Spiritually speaking, the blessing of the priest or leader or chaplain gives us the spiritual authority and discernment and protection we need to pray deeply in that place. And the people we pray for will experience great spiritual fruit from our intercession.



ORDINATION AND CONSECRATION

Besides submission, we can receive *authority by ordination or consecration*. Priests are ordained to be Jesus for us. So they have the same spiritual authority of Jesus Himself in intercession. Religious are consecrated by the Church to be the official intercessors for the Church. Their whole life is worship and intercession for others.

FBB has been officially established as an “Association of the Faithful” in many Arch/dioceses to serve the Church in missionary intercession. Therefore, we have special spiritual authority given by God and the Church to intercede as deeply as is possible for those places.

The position of spiritual authority given us by commitment in the Church releases Graces of Discernment, Wisdom, Protection, and Anointing from the Holy Spirit, so we can really pray deeply and effectively. However, if we step outside of the realm of our spiritual authority, or we try to intercede for situations of serious spiritual war beyond our spiritual position, we have also stepped out of God’s protection and are vulnerable to retaliation of the enemy. We need God’s Wisdom for intercession.

RELATIONSHIPS

Some other ways to discern spiritual authority for intercession are according to the *relationships* we have with others. For example, parents have unique authority to pray for their children. Any of us can pray for the people and places to which we are personally related; like our families and work places and schools and nations. However, we need to discern how to pray in each situation.

Somebody called me one day and said, “Sister, one of our intercessors went into the hospital today with a heart attack. Will you please pray for

her?” My response was “What did she just pray for? What was she praying for last?” I know intercessors. They are ready to pray for anything.

When I spoke with her and was able to ask her, “Before you went in the hospital, what were you praying for?” She said, “Well, I decided I would tear down the spirit of Masonry over our country, so I was doing a Jericho around the Queen’s palace.”

I said, “Oh! Were you doing this all by yourself? You were going to tear down the spirit of Masonry over this nation all by yourself! Do you realize what you were doing? You were dealing with high-level international spiritual powers of the devil all by yourself! You are out of your league. You are out of your depth. You are out of your territory. And you are out of the protection of God!” She got sick because she was praying in a spiritual war that was way beyond her ability to deal with is. Too much! Too big! And all by herself! So then we had to pray for her to be set free from the retaliation of the enemy against her.

The question the Lord asked us at the Sister’s intercession meeting, “Where does our authority lie?” is so important to understand. Also we need to discern the spiritual level with which we are dealing. In the case of the intercessor and masonry, she was dealing with a very high level international network of spiritual evil, even Satan worship itself. And what level of spiritual authority did she have? She was by herself praying. It definitely was NOT the level of spiritual authority needed to tear down masonry of over that whole country. So she experienced a strong retaliation of the enemy. Such an international level of spiritual warfare intercession requires international spiritual authority and specific spiritual weapons to be victorious in Jesus. ?” To understand “Where does our authority lie?” is very important for right discernment and spiritual protection in intercession.



A particular kind of *relationship with others* that gives us spiritual authority for intercession is a situation of *offense*. For example: Think of

a time when we came into a new experience of the Lord, like getting baptized in the Spirit. We were all on fire for God – a changed person. When that happened, we wanted everyone else to know Jesus as we do. So now we are going to go out and convert the whole world!

Maybe the first place we try is our own family. We come home all on fire with God and everybody just looks at us and says, “What happened to you!?” As we try to tell the family, the family might think we are loco or a religious fanatic! So no one listens. We are really “loco” for Jesus! But sometimes we just get hurt by this rejection.

Or let’s say, we go to work and the same thing happens. The people at work not only reject us, but they also may say a lot of negative things about us. So again, we get all hurt and offended. Then we go to our friends and say, “Please pray for me. They are persecuting me at work! They are saying all these negative things! I am really oppressed.”

In these cases we need better discernment. What is really happening here? We made a new commitment to Jesus. Jesus touched our lives and He filled us with His Presence. So every place we go, the Light of God is turned on very strongly in the spiritual realm. The Love of God is spiritually flowing out through us, even if we do not realize what’s happening. However, others experience it.

So we walk into work and people experience this Love that was not there before, or the Light is going on from you shining into their hearts. And they experience their own emptiness. They feel the emptiness spiritually. This may not be a conscious experience on their part, but that is what is happening. They know that we have something that they do not have and they want it. sometimes the only way they know how to get at it is to be negative. They are going to pick on us until they figure out what this is. “Oh, they are persecuting me!” is *not* what is really going on. They are not after us at all! They want Jesus Who is in us. They are looking for Jesus. They want what we have.

By their negative “attack” on us, God has just put us into a position of spiritual authority so we can pray for them right now. He has just given

us the key to their lives, so we can help open their door to Jesus. Do you know what that key is? *Intercession forgiveness!* The intercession of Jesus on the Cross – His special prayer of forgiveness - is the key. They want Jesus, not us. So we need right discernment here.

So what do we do? First, do *not* take the situation personally? Second, take them to Jesus! Then with Jesus we can pray in intercession for them, and use the key He just gave us. We can pray,

“For those who have hurt us, for those who are not doing or have not done what we think they should have done, for those who are not doing what God wants, we pray with Jesus on the Cross: "Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." For those who are in sin: "Father, do not hold their sins against them." And I choose to forgive them and release them in the Name of Jesus.

“Father, forgive me for anything I said or thought or felt or did to others that could keep them in bondage, especially repeating the negative things even if they were true. I ask for the Mind and the Heart of Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, help us to see one another as You do. Help us to speak about one another as You do. Holy Spirit, show us how to pray for one another. Amen”

As we pray this prayer and bless them, the Lord will walk right into their hearts. Pretty soon they will be coming to us for prayers. They may even ask us, “What have you got?” or “Would you say a little prayer for me?”

So, the Light of Christ can shine through us; and people will see the God’s Light and be drawn to the Light. People will experience God’s Love and God’s Anointing. People want the Anointing. They recognize the Anointing. The Anointing of the Presence of God draws everyone to Jesus, even if people do not realize what is actually happening. God can do miracles! Alleluia! I think I will make a special sign for us to remind us what to do in such cases:

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONAL! TAKE IS TO JESUS!

III. DISCERNING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

As intercessors, we need to be able to recognize and discern the *signs of the times* so we can find from the Holy Spirit how to pray. God is doing amazing things in our times in individuals, and on the local, national, and international levels of society. The enemy also is working on various counterfeits on these different levels and in the world's various systems.

NEW WORLD ORDER

Some people talk about a New World Order. This often refers to an international government that aims to control the whole world and supposedly provide for all people's needs. I have news for them! The New World Order has already started in Jesus Christ. When God became man, it was definitely a New World Order! This had never happened before! Jesus Christ, as God and man, is the foundation of the real New World Order! He calls it the "Kingdom of God". Here Jesus Himself is the Kings of kings and Lord of lords! As we are born into Jesus Christ, we become a New Creation in Him. And we enter into God's New World Order. God is quite capable of caring for all of us, since He made everything and it all belongs to Him. And we give glory to God as we hear the news that conversions to Jesus Christ are exploding all over the world – a fruit of His and our united intercession. More and more people are coming into God's New World Order. Alleluia!

ISLAM

The Church respects that Moslems profess faith in one God - the God of Abraham However, not all their beliefs, especially about the Lord Jesus Christ, are true. There is another counterfeit surfacing in the world out of Islam that is a sign of the times. Some people in Muslim nations speak about creating a caliphate, an international theological and government state under Islam. This is a direct counterfeit of what God has already initiated from His Throne.

God is working to reveal the Body of Christ as one in Jesus Christ and to establish the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in Heaven. And St. Paul says that even the whole creation is in travail for this very purpose as well – for God to reveal His Son. (cf. Romans 8: 19-23) The Holy Fathers in our time have been working continuously with all Christians to accomplish God the Father’s Dream. For us in intercession, we can pray as Jesus prayed,

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one. As You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, may they also be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. The Glory that You have given Me I have given them, so that they may be one, as We are one, I in them and You in Me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.” (John 17: 15 – 23) (NRSVCE)

The Holy Spirit is rapidly moving now to bring about unity in the Body of Christ for the Kingdom of God to be revealed in our midst.

THE JUBILEES

Jubilee is a 50th year anniversary celebration that God created in the Holy Bible. For Israel, Jubilee is a Holy Time with many Divine Promises. God’s Jubilee promises are available for all who celebrate 50th anniversaries. Two recent big Jubilees are important for us here: the 2000th Jubilee of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and the current Jubilees of Israel.

We are living in a time of one of the greatest moves of God. The great work of the Holy Spirit is to bring the Body of Christ into unity under Jesus Christ as the Lord. He started doing this by pouring out the experience of a New Pentecost all over the world. Then there was a great culmination of the Holy Spirit’s initiative for unity during the Great Jubilee celebration of the 2000th anniversary of the birth of the Lord Jesus. It was awesome! A tremendous move of God!

The Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up as Lord across all the nations of the earth. The Body of Christ was actually united in intercession and evangelization to celebrate this Big Jubilee. Everyone in the whole world knew about the Jubilee of Jesus and was touched by it. Everyone and everything basically stopped and focused on the Lord Jesus Christ. And great fruits of this celebration continue today in waves of conversion from the new intercession and the new evangelization everywhere. Glory to God!

Currently, in Israel, there are some important dates and Jubilees. The year 2017 is the same as Israel's year of 5777. Biblically that number is prophetically significant: five means grace; and seven means God; and three sevens mean Divine Completion and new beginning prophetically pointing to the Messiah.

This year we celebrate the 70th Jubilee of Israel, starting from the very first Jubilee when Israel entered the Promised Land of Canaan under Joshua. Also, 2017 is the 100th Jubilee Year of 1917 of the liberation of Israel from Ottoman Turk rule after hundreds of years. It is also the 50th Jubilee Year of the liberation of the God-given Holy Capital of Jerusalem and reunification of the Jewish State. Alleluia!

Israel has so many Jubilees at hand. God Himself declares the Jubilee time to be sacred and promises so many abundant blessings. As we bless Israel in these days and pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6), we can claim the Lord's Promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:3) and the many Jubilee Promises from all these Jubilees.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Some years ago, when all the turmoil erupted in the Middle East, with leaders of countries being brought down and so much violence, I went to the Lord. "God, I need to understand what You see here. All I hear is what is going on in the newspaper: all these riots and all these people in authority being taken down. What is going on? How can we see this?" The Lord said to me, "I am in this!" God is the One Who makes and unmakes kings. God in in this! (cf. Daniel 2:21)

So then I asked Him, “What do You mean, Lord?” and “How do we pray about all this?” He gave me a Psalm 2 from the Holy Bible.

“Why this uproar among the nations?
Why this impotent muttering of pagans –
kings on the earth rising in revolt,
princes plotting against the Lord, and His Anointed,”
(Doesn't that sound like a re-run of the news?)
“Now let us break their fetters!
Now let us throw off their yoke!
The One Whose Throne is in Heaven sits laughing,
The Lord derides them.
Then angrily He addresses them,
in a rage He strikes them with panic,
'This is My king, installed by Me
on Zion, My Holy Mountain.'
Let Me proclaim the Lord's Decree; He has told Me,
'You are My Son, today I have become Your Father.
Ask and I will give You the nations for Your heritage,
the ends of the earth for Your Domain.
With iron scepter You will break them,
shatter them like a potter's ware.'
So now, you kings, learn wisdom,
earthly rulers, be warned;
serve the Lord, fear Him,
tremble and kiss His Feet (worship Him),
or He will be angry and you will perish,
for His anger is very quick to blaze.
Happy all who take refuge in Him.” (Psalm 2: 1 – 12) (JB)

I said, “Lord, would You please explain this to us? What does it mean?”

He showed me that one of the unique characteristics we know about God, that we see in the Kingdom of God and in the economy of God in the spiritual realm, is that *only God can take an initiative. Only God is creative and can take initiatives.* The enemy cannot take an initiative. The enemy can only react to something God started. The devil can never

do anything new. He always repeats all his schemes and patterns of evil that he started at the beginning.

How else does this ancient prophecy of Psalm 2, which was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, translate into our lives now? What is it that God is doing by allowing all the turmoil and spiritual war that is going on? What is God doing? One thing that God is doing is *revealing His Son* as the Lord and Governor of the nations. “This is My Son!” I have given Him the nations for His Inheritance!

I already mentioned that the Holy Spirit is rapidly moving now to reveal and establish the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ and Kingdom of God in our midst. The Holy Spirit did this in an awesome way during the 2000th Jubilee of Jesus. Jesus Christ and God’s Kingdom is still being lifted up above the kingdoms of this world. The enemy is still trying to counterfeit and preempt the work God is doing by much evil.

However, God is bringing good out of all the evil that is happening. Many conversions are coming out of the persecution of Christians and displacement of many peoples. God’s momentum will bring forth even much greater Divine Fruits for His Glory.



NEW AGE

We already mentioned a little about the enemy’s attempt to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit with the *New Age Religion*. New Age Religion is a combination of various belief systems, philosophies, and religious practices which include music, alternative medicine, psychology, mind control, and meditation. The New Age Religion or Spirituality makes man the center of everything. Man is also considered to be divine. It is based on elements of pagan non-Christian religions and also on atheism and Satan worship: for example, Wicca, Santeria, Druid religion, White Magic, Voodoo, and Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism.

People are dealing with the New Age in the Church throughout the whole world. I strongly recommend that you read the following important documents available from the Vatican web site.

The first one is a comprehensive study to help us see New Age as compared to Christianity.

First: In 13/20 August 2003, the Holy See published a comprehensive document in, the L'Osservatore Romano called "Jesus, The Bearer of The Water of Life: A Christian reflection on the 'New Age'." This important document clearly defines the New Age and many of its practices and compares them to Christianity. ^[4]

The second letter clearly deals with the fundamental differences between Christian and non - Christian meditation.

Second: On October 15, 1989 His eminence Joseph Card. Ratzinger Prefect of the Congregation for the doctrine of the Faith wrote a "Letter To The Bishops Of The Catholic Church On Some Aspects Of Christian Meditation". ^[5]

As a missionary, I have seen that the Holy Spirit has put a tremendous hunger for God into people's hearts. People are even desperate to know God as He really is. People are hungry to know themselves as God sees them so that they can become holy and become like Jesus. Whether they actually realize and say it in the words I am using or not, this hunger is still underneath their seeking.

Such hunger opened a void in people that was not filled with the Evangelization of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, the way opened for the devil to come in with his counterfeit of the New Age Movement.

^[4] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html

^[5] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19891015_meditazione-cristiana_en.html

Even in countries where there are few Christians (like Japan that is only one half of 1% Christian), young people were rejecting the religion of their parents because it seemed dead. But they were and are hungry for God. So they are creating new pagan religions. This is all part of the New Age conglomeration. There are so many aspects we can talk about in the New Age Movement. I will mention just a few practices and how we can discern and deal with New Age in intercession.



MIND CONTROL AND MEDITATION

So many people seek spiritual experiences in the New Age. One way they do this is by various forms of “meditation” (TM) or mind control or “contemplation” according to the practices of eastern religions.

I remember my own experience of mind control for prayer. We were directed to sit down now and begin to speak peace into every part of our body - starting at the head. After we did this, people began to have spiritual experiences. However, it was not the Holy Spirit! I needed deliverance from that blissful spirit, which was not of God that came into me during those practices. What happened was: the focus on self and emptying out of everything in my mind created a spiritual void inside of me. And an evil spirit - counterfeiting God’s gifts - came into that void.

As Christians, we do not seek spiritual experiences. We seek the True God as He reveals Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has given us the way to seek and find Him. That is by praise and worship, with our hearts and minds set on and filled with the Lord Jesus Christ. When we pray, we do not empty our minds as in eastern religion practices. That just creates a vacuum for the devil to come in. Rather, we look to fill our minds with the Lord Jesus. St Teresa of Avila wisely counsels everyone to always keep their eyes on the crucified-risen humanity of the Lord Jesus when they enter the spiritual realm in prayer. He is the only One Who knows the way through the spiritual world to the Father. The Lord

is our Good Shepherd for every step of the spiritual journey. He alone is our protection against deception.

So, I learned to put Jesus first and to pray the way of Jesus! Alleluia! When we praise and worship Jesus, the Lord comes in and inhabits the praises of His people. He fills us with His Presence. Then we have real Peace. Alleluia!



YOGA

Yoga is the main religious ritual practice of Hinduism. Some people try to practice yoga only as a physical exercise, not realizing the effects in the spiritual dimension.

One day I was talking with a young woman who loved the Lord but she couldn't pray. So I said, "Let's take a day to pray and seek the Lord about why she couldn't pray." We had just started when she said, "Do you think I should go for my yoga class today?" She was doing yoga for exercise and not for any spiritual reason. She did not even know there was a spiritual dimension to yoga.

As soon as she mentioned about her class, I knew that this was the reason of her inability to pray. She was in a spiritual bondage from yoga. As I already said, even though she did not know about the spiritual dimension of yoga, she still experienced the consequences of practicing it and came into spiritual bondage.

I explained to her that yoga is the main religious ritual of Hinduism. Therefore this is the devil's territory. When someone does yoga, even for exercise, they focus on self. This is an open door to the devil. He has the same focus - on himself. The devil is very self-centered. If he sees others looking at self, he feels right at home and comes right in. Also because yoga is a religious ritual of a pagan religion, it is one of the counterfeit practices of the devil. It is his territory in the spirit. So even

if people do not realize what is going on here, they still can come into spiritual bondage.

Think of it like this: If someone goes into a hospital of contagious diseases and does not know it, this does not mean they are protected from getting the diseases. The same principle applies to spiritual matters. If we practice the ways of the devil, not knowing these are his ways, it does not mean we are protected for spiritual bondage. We need to discern better our experiences according to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The young woman I met with renounced the practice of yoga and went to confession. And now she is free and can pray. Glory to Jesus!

These days even priests and sisters are practicing and promoting various New Age practices. They try to put Christian ways and the ways of the enemy together. God clearly says we cannot put God and Baal together. (2 Corinthians 6: 15-17) (NRSVCE) It does not work! We cannot do a ritual that belongs to Satan's system and try to put Jesus' Name in there and figure that we are going to be all right. Sorry! It does not work!

Some of this is just even common sense. We don't put a picture of Satan on the wall and write 'Jesus' on the top of it and figure we will get a blessing. Does it even make any sense to put a picture of the devil on the wall and write Jesus Name over the top of it? Why not just put Jesus' picture up there? He alone is the source of all the Blessings of Heaven. (cf. Ephesians 1: 3)

I already mentioned what St. Teresa of Avila counsels us in regard to meditation and contemplation. Keep our focus on the crucified-risen humanity of Jesus Christ. The same counsel is true for every new Age practice. Regarding the yoga, there are plenty of exercises we can do that are not part of religious ritual. We don't need these counterfeits. And personally, I really don't see how people even have time to get into the counterfeits when God has so much for us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

MUSIC

The mixture of pagan religion and Christianity does NOT work in in the music realm either.

One time I was in India for an all-night vigil. The spiritual atmosphere was really heavy and it took us most of them night to breakthrough into the Lord's Peace. We had a Holy Mass to close the vigil. After communion, a priest who was there came up to me to ask if he could sing a special song. I let him go ahead. He began to sing an ancient Hindu melody. As he sang, I saw in the spirit, a back demon, literally come into the place and a great heaviness covered everyone there. All the Peace left. So immediately, I tried to lead the people in singing the Name of Jesus, asking the Lord to restore His Peace.

After the vigil, I talked to the people about this experience. They all confirmed the same thing happened to them. And they told me that this practice was going on in many places in the name of inculturation. People were taking old Hindu music, which was written to call on specific false gods and demons and they are trying to put Christian words on the melody. The demons consider this melody of music their territory. So it becomes an open door for them to enter a place.

I believe there needs to be better discernment about the practices of a culture and the spiritual results of following those practices. We cannot just put something Christian on top of something pagan and expect good fruit.

I understand what the Holy Father has asked us to do about respecting the cultures of people. There are gifts and truth in every culture. However, we really need discernment to divide out what are the good points of the culture, what are the things in the culture that are of God, and what is connected to the devil in the spiritual realm. In some cases, the enemy has taken some portion of truth from a culture and twisted it to where the devil gets the glory instead of God; or where people wind up worshipping the creature instead of the Creator. We have to ask: Does this really bring us closer to Jesus?

Besides the pagan melodies, there are whole kinds of music that the enemy has helped to make which are an open door to the devil's realm and demonic bondage. For example, hard rock music, heavy metal music, and satanic music - with its subliminal satanic messages to worship the devil and practice every kind of evil.

Our young people especially love music and are at risk to serious spiritual bondage and even death as a result of being immersed in the music of the devil. We do have powerful alternatives. Today, there is an abundance of new Holy Spirit anointed music being produced in many countries. Amazing worship of God! And this anointed music is becoming more and more in demand even in non-Christian countries.



THE ENNEAGRAM

Have you ever heard of the New Age practice called the enneagram? The enneagram traces its roots back to the gnostic, heretical beliefs and practices of the third and fourth centuries AD.

“The clear origin and purpose of the Enneagram is to initiate a Gnostic spiritual awakening to one's alleged true “divine” self, which is in itself an occult initiation. This is the claim and goal of virtually all occult and New Age teachings - self. The purpose of such initiation is a shift in consciousness, a change in the way one views reality -- God, the world, others, and self.” [8]

The enneagram promotes spiritual direction and self-knowledge and transformation of personality *by the self*, according to a number system. Some people, including priests and religious, have promoted this practice of the New Age in parishes and communities around the world. I have met people deeply involved in this and they were really in a spiritual bondage with focus on themselves. When they ask me, “What

[8] www.christiananswersforthenewage.org/Articles_Enneagram.html

number are you?” I answer, “I am sorry but I am not a number. I am a child of God! I don’t fit into your system!”

In 1989, Dorothy Ranaghan did a doctoral study of the enneagram compared to Christianity. Dorothy Ranaghan is the wife of Deacon Kevin Ranaghan. They were founding members of a Catholic charismatic covenant community in South Bend, Indiana called: “the People of Praise”. They are pioneers of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in America.

In her study, Dorothy clearly shows that the enneagram is 100% *not* Christian, 100% against Christian world view. It has the main focus of the New Age: focus on self - which is the Devil’s door and territory. Enneagram is a spiritual counterfeit. People who practice this really do come into a serious spiritual bondage.

The Holy Spirit can give us true self-knowledge, as God sees us, by His Charismatic Gift of the Word of Knowledge. The enneagram is a counterfeit of this Gift and of authentic Christian spiritual direction. True self-knowledge can only come from God. Also, the Holy Spirit is the One Who transforms us into Jesus Christ. We cannot do this by ourselves. We can pray and ask the Lord, “Holy Spirit, I want to grow. Please come and help me.” or “Holy Spirit, I don’t know what is wrong with me. I keep doing these bad things all the time. Would you please show me the roots? Lord, let me see myself like You see me.” That is a powerful prayer and God will do it.

One time the Lord revealed myself to me as He saw me. When I saw what God showed me, I was totally overwhelmed. At that time, I didn’t believe in a God big enough to deal with all I saw in my own heart. I did not know God well enough to deal with what He showed me. So in His Mercy, God took me off with Him a whole year and helped me find Him again. He provided a wise spiritual director to help me walk through that time in my life. Truly the Lord is faithful! Alleluia!

So, if you seriously want true self-knowledge and transformation into Jesus Christ, pray for this gift of self-revelation from the Holy Spirit. But be ready for the consequences. I pray that you, too, will have

somebody standing by you to keep guiding you into all the Lord Jesus is and has for you..

Just a note of Wisdom: We can do studies about the spiritual journey and all the possibilities of the spiritual life. We can read the entire Holy Bible and all the teachings of the Church. But when God is dealing with us, we usually forget everything we have learned. Sometimes, we do not even have a clue about what is really going on. And then we don't know what to do when God is dealing with us. Perhaps if we did understand what He is doing, we would try to take charge of our lives and turn everything around to the way we want it to go so He cannot do His work. Maybe that is why He lets us forget everything – so that He can transform us, change us, and take us deeper for His Glory in His Way. God is in control when He is dealing with us. We just need to praise and worship Him and, yes, surrender to all Him.



REIKI

Many people in different countries are practicing the New Age method of healing called Reiki. Reiki is a Japanese technique for healing by laying on of hands. This method is a spiritual practice that supposedly draws on an unseen "life force energy". The question is: Where is that life-force coming from since most Japanese people do not know the True God or believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God? There is only one other possibility in the spiritual realm - the devil. Reiki is a direct counterfeit of the Charismatic Gift of Divine Healing from the Holy Spirit that can be given by the laying on of hands and also can be administered through the God's Sacrament of Healing.



TRADITIONAL RELIGION

There are many other examples of the counterfeits which the devil has made of the Holy Spirit's Gifts. Besides the New Age religion, we see his same devious work take place in traditional pagan religions, for example, in Africa and in Papua New Guinea. People seeking spiritual power practice sorcery and witchcraft with all kinds of manifestations: like astro-travel, levitation, bi-location, translation. These are all counterfeits which the enemy has made of God's True Gifts from the Holy Spirit.

God has given many amazing gifts to His People over the ages. For example, in the 1600's there was a Poor Clare Contemplative Nun, Sister Maria de Jesus de Agreda, ^[9] who lived in Spain. She had the gift of bilocation. The angels took her from Spain to New Mexico in the USA to preach about Jesus to the Indians. This bilocation was a Gift of God. Padre Pio also experienced this gift. ^[10] Many *extraordinary* things happened in the lives of the Saints. They all had special Gifts from the Holy Spirit. It is time for God's People to wake up and take back what the enemy has stolen.



I already mentioned how we can discern New Age experiences. Let me repeat here: the main discernment principles are to ask: *What is the focus? Where is it leading us? and Who gets the Glory?* We can test our experiences by checking where it leads us: closer to Jesus or away from Jesus? We can ask what the focus is and who gets the glory for what happens at these meeting?

In the New Age realm, the focus is on self. "I make peace in myself." "I heal myself." The focus is "I" in the New Age.

Jesus didn't talk like that. Jesus said we have to die to ourselves. The

^[9] <http://newmexicohistory.org/people/maria-de-jesus-de-agreda>

^[10] miraclesofthesaints.com/2010/09/bilocation-of-st-padre-pio.html

focus on self is the devil's territory. And if people are taking glory to themselves, then we should have lots of questions. Where are they coming from? However, if Jesus is the focus of a meeting and He gets the glory, then we can have confidence in our hearts that this meeting is of God. The Lord is here! Alleluia!

Also, I already mentioned, the devil has tried to counterfeit all of God's Work and Gifts. However, there is one Gift he can never counterfeit. That is the Peace of Jesus - because Jesus IS Peace. (cf. Micah 5:5) So the Presence and the Peace of Jesus Christ is the main sign to look for in spiritual experiences so we can discern what is of God and what is not of God, especially in New Age matters.

We need the Holy Spirit to help us, to give us revelation, to help us understand more and more deeply Who Jesus is and how do we come to Him. How do we pray? How do we receive all this care that the Father has for us? God is a Good Father. He only wants good for us. We can trust Him in all things. The Holy Spirit will help us. Alleluia!



OPEN DOORS

People are so hungry for God. They will do anything to find God! In dealing with the counterfeits of the enemy, particularly in the New Age matters, people sometimes do not understand what happens spiritually. They do some of these practices and then get caught in spiritual bondage before they realize it. Our decisions can open the door either for the Lord Jesus or for the enemy to come in.



One time, I was in Ireland working with the young people called: the "Christlins". They were a wonderful group of young people ranging from ages 18 to 30 and they were on fire for Jesus. Their main ministry was evangelization in the schools and giving retreats to young people.

One day, I was talking with one of the young people and she said, "Please, I need a longer time to talk. Seriously, I really need help." Then she started telling me that she was having all kinds of terrible nightmares. She said, "People pray with me to see what is happening. They say it is caused by evil spirits. So they rebuke the spirits, but I still have the nightmares. I don't know what to do. I don't want this in my life and I don't know who to go to. Nobody is helping me."

The more she was talking about this, the more I was thinking, "This sounds really serious. It's a lot bigger than I can handle. I don't know what to do." At the same time, she was talking to me, I was asking Jesus in my heart, "Lord, I don't know what to say. I don't know how to deal with this. Jesus, what am I supposed to do?" He said, "Bring her to me."

So after she was all done talking, I said, "I don't know what to do, but let's take it to Jesus." She was baptized in the Spirit, so we started praying together in the Holy Spirit. And we said, "Lord, what is at the root of this? What do You want to do?"

As we prayed and listened to the Lord, one word came to my mind: *decision*. I didn't understand what it meant. So, I asked her, "Did anything come to your mind when we were praying? She said, "Yes. When I was younger the situation in our family was so bad when I was a teenager, that one day I just said to God, 'God, I quit! Devil, you can take my life!'"

I said, "Oh, did you say that? Did you ever apologize to Jesus for saying that?" She said, "Yes." Then I started going through all the things someone needs to do to get free from occult bondage. I said, "Did you ever take it to confession, because you really need priestly power to get free from occult bondages." She said, "Yes." Also, when she was baptized in the Holy Spirit, she asked Jesus to be the Lord of her life. As she was talking, she seemed to be doing most of the things that needed to be done. However, the word *decision* came back to me. So I asked her, "Did you ever reverse the decision?" She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Did you ever tell Jesus you changed the decision you made when you were a teenager. And did you make a new one for Him to replace

that decision you made for the devil?” She said, “No. How do you do that?” I said, “Just say it! “Lord Jesus, please forgive me for that decision I made as a teenager. I choose to reverse that decision in the Name of Jesus. And, I make a new decision to choose You to be Lord in that moment of my life.”” So she said the words, and then we finished.

About a year later, I came back to see the Christlins. She came running over to me and said, “Sister, guess what! No more nightmares!” I said, “Praise Jesus!” Then I asked, “Lord, what happened? Please explain this to us. I didn’t pray for deliverance. I didn’t pray for healing. I didn’t do anything.”

The Lord showed me that each one of us is like a spiritual house where He wants to live. Every decision that we take opens a door or a window to the spiritual world. In the spiritual world, there are two possibilities. It is either God and Jesus, or it is the devil.

What she did with her words as a teenager was open a spiritual door by her decision. And that door was open to the devil to come into her life. When she got baptized in the Spirit, however, she opened the door of her life to Jesus. But she didn’t close the other door. People would pray for her and they were right. It was an evil spirit. But every time people would cast out the evil spirit, he could come right back in, any time he wanted, because the spiritual door was open. However, once she closed that door and opened every door of her life to Jesus, the evil spirit could not get back in again. Then she was truly free. Alleluia!



The decisions we make or do not make really do affect us spiritually, even if we don’t understand what is happening. We have to be so aware of the doors we are opening to the spiritual world by our decisions. Sometimes people do this inadvertently. Someone might say, “Oh, I think I will look in the newspaper at the astrology column just for fun and see what my sign says for today. I don’t believe in that stuff, but I am just going to take a peek.” What did they just do? They made a decision to open the door to the spiritual realm of evil. God says in the

Holy Bible very clearly that astrology is a sin against the first commandment. This sin puts up a block between them and God, even if they did it just for fun. They really need to repent and close that door.

Perhaps some of you have been involved in New Age or other spiritual practices against God without realizing what you were really doing. Maybe have you opened some spiritual doors to evil without even realizing it? I don't want you to be overly worried or afraid about this. But you do need to deal with these things. You need to repent, renounce, reject, reverse specific decisions, and make a new decision for the Lord Jesus and His Ways.

Also, you need to take it to confession as inadvertent sin again the first commandment, so the Blood of Jesus can set you free and protect you. This will make a big difference in your life so you can enter more deeply into the Lord Jesus and His ways of prayer and His ways of doing things. God has so many possibilities for us in Jesus Christ. Personally, I really do not understand how people even have any time for all the counterfeits. God has given us so much more in Jesus Christ. Come, Holy Spirit, please lead us into all Truth. (cf. John 16:13)

In discerning the signs of the times, we need the Holy Spirit's Wisdom and Vision – to see as Jesus sees about what is happening and what He wants to do. The Holy Spirit gives us revelation of God's point of view. He will show us how the Lord wants us to pray in intercession. "With God ALL things are possible!" (Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37) (JB) God is so amazing! Amen. Alleluia!

"Glory be to Him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to Him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3: 20-21) (JB)

IV. SUMMARY

The Holy Spirit gives everyone born into Jesus Christ the Gift of Spiritual Discernment. The first and most important spiritual discernment we can have is of the Presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only Reality against Which we can measure all our experiences of life, prayer, and intercession, so as to discern what is of God and what is not of God.

We have studied here two sets of principles we can use to assist in basic spiritual discernment. These we called the internal and the external measuring sticks of discernment. These measuring sticks can work together in the process of discernment. Actually, we usually do use more than one means of testing spirits in our experiences, so that we can have greater certainty about what is and what is not from God.

Other Gifts of the Holy Spirit - especially wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel - are important for us in discernment. These especially help us to rightly interpret discernments and know what God wants us to do with the discernments we receive. Come, Holy Spirit!

We also studied some special principles for discernment in intercession. Although we also use the internal and external measuring sticks in intercession, they always have to be tempered with the special principles of intercession discernment. Intercessors have experiences that others may not normally have in life and prayer. And as we work with God in intercession, we are still learning Who He is and how He works. The Holy Spirit continues to teach us – leading us into all Truth. (cf. John 16:13)

Finally, we spoke about discerning the signs of the times. It is essential that we see current situations as God sees them and according to what He wants to do through intercession.



There is so much more that can be said about spiritual discernment in intercession. If I could leave you with some points that sum up the very heart of basic spiritual discernment and discernment for intercession I would say:

GO TO JESUS FIRST!

LOOK FOR JESUS AND HIS PEACE!

LISTEN TO HIS VOICE!

DON'T TAKE THINGS PERSONAL! TAKE THEM TO JESUS!

Remember what the Blessed Mother said in Cana of Galilee:

“GO TO JESUS AND DO WHAT HE TELLS YOU.” (John 2:5) (JB)

ALWAYS - GIVE GOD ALL THE GLORY IN EVERY SITUATION!

Come, Holy Spirit, help us to go to Jesus - see Jesus - cling to Jesus - live deeper and deeper in union with Jesus - listen to His Voice – follow Jesus wherever He goes. And, we give all the Glory back to the Lord Jesus and to God our Almighty Father and to the Holy Spirit - for all God has done, all He is doing, and all He will do. He is our All in all!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

+ In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ALLELUIA!!!



APPENDIX A:

INTERCESSOR'S

PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

APPENDIX A:

INTERCESSOR'S PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

(TO RELEASE OTHERS TO JESUS)

As the Holy Spirit leads, after a time of praise and worship, we pray with Jesus our Lord:

For those who have hurt us, for those who are not doing or have not done what we think they should have done, for those who are not doing what God wants: "Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." For those who are in sin: "Father, do not hold their sins against them." And I choose to forgive them and release them in the name of Jesus.

Father, forgive me for anything I said or thought or felt or did to others that could keep them in bondage, especially repeating the negative things even if they were true. I ask for the Mind and the Heart of Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, help us to see one another as You do. Help us to speak about one another as you do. Holy Spirit, show us how to pray for one another. Amen.

After praying this prayer, we lift the person or persons up to Jesus and place them in His Sacred Heart. Then we sing praising the Lord, calling on the Name of Jesus, and praying in the Holy Spirit until the Holy Spirit brings to our mind how to think and pray for them, or until the burden we feel for them lifts from our hearts and we experience God's Peace and Love toward them. We end with praise and thanksgiving to God for all He has done in our time of intercession.

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Nihil Obstat: Father Pelin D'Souza, Censor

Imprimatur: His Eminence Maurice Michael Cardinal Otunga

Given at is Eminence's Residence

Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa

25th November 1994, Feast of St. Catherine, Martyr

APPENDIX B:

INTERCESSOR'S

MIRACLE PRAYER

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INTERCESSOR'S MIRACLE PRAYER

(To Renew Our Commitment of Love to Jesus)

*“The Love of God has been poured forth in our hearts
by the Holy Spirit; and this is God’s Gift to us.” (Romans 5:5)*

“Come, Holy Spirit, Come.”

We sing and pray for a time to welcome and invite the Holy Spirit to come and fill us even more with God’s Divine Love and all of His Gifts right now.

As the Holy Spirit is filling our hearts even more with God’s Divine Love right now, we do not want to keep this Love just for ourselves. But we give it back first of all to Our Father in Heaven. Our Almighty Father has loved us with all of His Heart and we see this especially in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us renew our commitment of love to Our Father in Heaven together. And then renew our love to the Lord Jesus.

Let us pray:

“Dear Father in Heaven, thank you for loving me with all of Your Heart, especially through our Lord Jesus Christ. I love you with all of my heart too. And I also love you in reparation for all those who do not love you today. “

We sing and pray a while, loving Our Father in Heaven ourselves. Then, as we love Our Father for others, especially in reparation for those who do not love God, we lift them up in our hands to the Father. “Abba Father, how I love you.”

Now we want to renew our commitment of love to Jesus together.

Let us pray:

“Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me with all of Your Heart and all of Your Life. Thank you for even shedding Your Precious Blood and dying

on the cross for me. Thank you for forgiving all of my sins through your Holy Cross.

“Lord Jesus, come more deeply into my heart right now. Fill me more with your Divine Love, with Your Divine Life. Please forgive me all my sins. I ask you to forgive me especially for all the times I was “God’s little helper”. Forgive me when I did not come to You first and ask You first what You wanted me to do, even when I pray. I DO want to follow You, Lord Jesus. Heal me, Lord. Fill me more with your Holy Spirit and Your Divine Love. Live out Your Life in Me.

“Come, Holy Spirit. Fill me more with Your Divine Love. Make Jesus the Lord of my whole life. I surrender my whole life to You. I give you my way of thinking I give you my way of doing things. I give you my way of praying. I renounce all the ways of the world. I renounce all sin. I renounce Satan and all his evil ways and all his evil spirits.

“I choose You, Lord Jesus. I choose Your Ways. Come, Holy Spirit. Fill me more with Your Divine Love. Make Jesus the Lord of my whole life and the Lord of my prayer. Release in me all of Your Gifts. Help me to love other people as Jesus does. Teach me how to pray. Help me to follow Jesus. Help me to be faithful to Jesus, so I can live in God’s Family forever. Amen.”

We can now take some time to sing and pray a love song to Jesus. As we pray, remember how Jesus came to Thomas after the resurrection. He said, “Look Thomas. Here are the wounds in My Hands and Feet and Side. Put your finger there. Doubt no longer, but only believe. This same Jesus is here with us right now. As we pray, close your eyes and look at Jesus as Thomas did. And maybe somehow you can reach up and put your finger into the wounds of Jesus today. Let His Precious Blood wash through you with all His Love and Mercy and Healing and Miracles. Then let us lift up our people to Jesus. Place them in His Sacred Heart so His precious Blood can wash through them, too, with all His Grace and Miracles. Let us sing and pray, “Precious Jesus, how I love You.” Amen.

APPENDIX C:

EPHESIANS PRAYER

FOR THE CHURCH

APPENDIX C:

EPHESIANS PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

(From Ephesians.1:17-23; 3:14-21)

OUR FATHER, Who art in Heaven

FATHER IN HEAVEN, GOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, FATHER OF GLORY, we pray that you give each of us in Your Church a Spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring us to full knowledge of You. We ask You to enlighten the eyes of our minds so that we can see what hope Your call holds for us, what rich glories You have promised the saints will inherit, and how infinitely great is the power that You have exercised for us believers.

This we can tell from the strength of Your power at work in CHRIST JESUS When You used it to raise Him from the dead and make Him sit at Your Right Hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. You have put all things under His Feet, and made Him, as RULER OF EVERYTHING, the HEAD OF THE CHURCH, which is His Body, the fullness of Him Who fills the whole creation.

FATHER, from Whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name, this is what we pray as we kneel before You: Out of Your infinite glory, may You give us the power through YOUR SPIRIT for our hidden selves to grow strong, so that CHRIST may live in our hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, we will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height, and the depth, until, knowing the Love of CHRIST, which is beyond all knowledge, we are filled with the utter fullness of GOD.

*GLORY BE TO YOU WHOSE POWER, WORKING IN US,
CAN DO INFINITELY MORE THAN WE CAN ASK OR IMAGINE;
GLORY BE TO YOU FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION
IN THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS
FOR EVER AND EVER AMEN. ALLELUIA.*

APPENDIX D:

RULES FOR

GREATER DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

BY ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

APPENDIX D:

RULES FOR GREATER DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS ^[11]

By St. Ignatius Loyola

First Rule: It is proper to God and to His Angels in their movements to give true spiritual gladness and joy, taking away all sadness and disturbance which the enemy brings on. Of this latter it is proper to fight against the spiritual gladness and consolation, bringing apparent reasons, subtleties and continual fallacies.

Second Rule: It belongs to God our Lord to give consolation to the soul without preceding cause, for it is the property of the Creator to enter, go out and cause movements in the soul, bringing it all into love of His Divine Majesty. I say without cause: without any previous sense or knowledge of any object through which such consolation would come, through one's acts of understanding and will.

Third Rule: With cause, as well the good Angel as the bad can console the soul, for contrary ends: the good Angel for the profit of the soul, that it may grow and rise from good to better, and the evil Angel, for the contrary, and later on to draw it to his damnable intention and wickedness.

Fourth Rule: It is proper to the evil Angel, who forms himself under the appearance of an angel of light, to enter with the devout soul and go out with himself: that is to say, to bring good and holy thoughts, conformable to such just soul, and then little by little he aims at coming out drawing the soul to his covert deceits and perverse intentions.

Fifth Rule: We ought to note well the course of the thoughts, and if the beginning, middle and end is all good, inclined to all good, it is a sign of the good Angel; but if in the course of the thoughts which he brings it ends in something bad, of a distracting tendency, or less good than what

[11] <https://www.catholicspiritualdirection.org/spiritualexercises.pdf>

the soul had previously proposed to do, or if it weakens it or disquiets or disturbs the soul, taking away its peace, tranquility and quiet, which it had before, it is a clear sign that it proceeds from the evil spirit, enemy of our profit and eternal salvation.

Sixth Rule: When the enemy of human nature has been perceived and known by his serpent's tail and the bad end to which he leads on, it helps the person who was tempted by him, to look immediately at the course of the good thoughts which he brought him at their beginning, and how little by little he aimed at making him descend from the spiritual sweetness and joy in which he was, so far as to bring him to his depraved intention; in order that with this experience, known and noted, the person may be able to guard for the future against his usual deceits.

Seventh Rule: In those who go on from good to better, the good Angel touches such soul sweetly, lightly and gently, like a drop of water which enters into a sponge; and the evil touches it sharply and with noise and disquiet, as when the drop of water falls on the stone. And the above-said spirits touch in a contrary way those who go on from bad to worse. The reason of this is that the disposition of the soul is contrary or like to the said Angels. Because, when it is contrary, they enter perceptibly with clatter and noise; and when it is like, they enter with silence as into their own home, through the open door.

Eighth Rule: When the consolation is without cause, although there be no deceit in it, as being of God our Lord alone, as was said; still the spiritual person to whom God gives such consolation, ought, with much vigilance and attention, to look at and distinguish the time itself of such actual consolation from the following, in which the soul remains warm and favored with the favor and remnants of the consolation past; for often in this second time, through one's own course of habits and the consequences of the concepts and judgments, or through the good spirit or through the bad, he forms various resolutions and opinions which are not given immediately by God our Lord, and therefore they have need to be very well examined before entire credit is given them, or they are put into effect.