

A Discernment Process

Time: Discernment is a process that takes time.

Journal: Get a special book and record your thoughts and reflections.

An Open Heart: Come with a readiness to follow the path wherever it leads. There is no point in coming to a discernment process if you have already decided the outcome!

Read the story of the Rich young man [Mk 10: 17 -28](#) ([Mt 19:16-30](#); [Luke 18:18-30](#)) It is good to find a quiet spot where you can sit comfortable and read quietly.

•Read the passage over slowly several times, mouth the words to help you slow down (We are reading as a prayer not as a fact finding exercise).

•Sit quietly for a few minutes and let yourself become aware of a word or a phrase from the passage. Don't try to force it, but wait till something comes.

•When you have a word or phrase or silence if nothing comes, repeat the word/phrase several times. Ask yourself questions like:

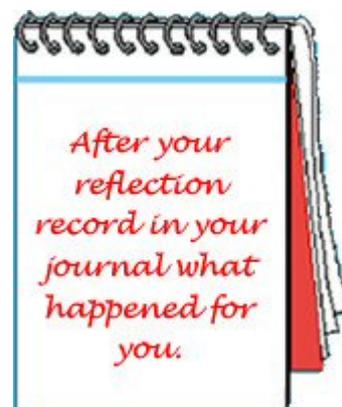
What does this word/phrase mean?

Why is this particular word/phrase coming to mind?

What does it remind me of?

What is going on in my life at present that makes this word/phrase relevant ... and so on. Chew it all over.

- After doing this for some time, put it all into a prayer form. Ask God for guidance and help, for inspiration, for courage if needed.
- When you have done this take time to simply be in God's presence. This is a time for LISTENING. Is God's Word challenging, supportive, encouraging? So often we do the first steps and fail to wait on what God has to say to us. We will not hear words as such but in the silence God's will communicated. You may not become aware of what is happening for some time, but eventually you will hear. So do not worry if all is not revealed at your first attempt. You need to stay with this and pray regularly to come to an understanding of what God is asking of you.



As you continue to reflect on this passage:

Note Jesus' response : Jesus, looking at him loved him and said, '***you lack one thing: go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.***'

Jesus loved him. This was a young man that kept the Jewish Law, i.e. he followed the precepts of his religion faithfully from his youth. The call from Jesus was for something more.

What do you think that something more could be?

What would be the something more for you?

Is Jesus calling YOU to something more?

If you believe that this is your call, what may be your 'possessions' that could be a road block to your following Jesus in this specific way? Take time to reflect here.



Think about relationships, work, study, possessions, prayer, ministry. What do you have that you would find it difficult to live without? Record some of your resistances.

Now think about what your life might look like if you were completely open to God's Grace?



With God's grace I can do anything! As you reflect is there a particular way of life that comes to mind? For example, I would really love to have a great marriage. I think this is where I can best serve God with all I am. Or,yes! marriage, would be good but I get the feeling that God is asking me to look at Priesthood....? Religious Life....?

Refining your discernment even more

Now we come to the refining of your discernment:

It is relatively easy to choose between something that may be good and something that may be bad. But it is a lot harder when it comes to choose between two "goods"

You really want to follow Jesus to the best of your ability. How???? What does this desire actually mean for how you live?

Christian Marriage is the way the majority of people live out their Christian Baptismal call. This is a wonderful vocation and is the basis on which all life within our Church is built. If you believe that Marriage is for you [click here](#).

However, you may feel that on one level you would like to be married but on another level you feel drawn to something different. Let us look at what may be different.

Religious life: Is this where God is calling and leading you? (If you believe that God may be calling you to Priesthood [click here](#).)

Priesthood: Are you a baptized Catholic, single male? Are you called to lead people to Christ through presiding at Eucharist and guiding a local parish community? Are you called to religious life or diocesan ministry as a priest?

Deacon: Are you a baptized male Catholic, married or single, who feels the call to serve God's people in the ministry of deacon? Your local church (diocese) may already have the ministry of deacon established or you may be the first to enquire of your local bishop.

As you think about your call, lots of questions may be going through your mind ... am I worthy? Am I silly to think that God might be calling me (like, I know me!) have I got what it takes? Will people think I'm mad? What will my family and friends say if they knew I was thinking about? Why become a religious today? People say that religious life is dying!

YES: There will be questions and most are ones that are not easy to answer.

REMEMBER: *God does not call us because we are worthy, or good, or 'holy' or ... God calls simply because God knows us and knows what is the best way we can be the person God created us to be.*

Sr Joan Chittister was once asked: **Why would you become a religious today?** Her answer: **Well, why not!**

Religious life may be the only place where you may be able to express your deep love for Jesus in such a way that you can be authentically yourself.



You may be asking yourself, if I choose this radical following of Jesus in an exclusive love relationship

Will there be hardships? YES

Will I be lonely? At times, YES

Will I miss my family and friends? YES

BUT

Will I grow as a person? YES

Will I develop as a disciple of Jesus? YES

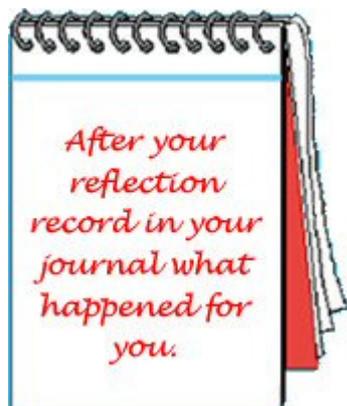
Will I be able to share my faith? YES

Will community life be a challenge? YES

Will I discover peace and joy at a deep inner level? YES

Will I have to do this alone? NO... at all times in the journey you will be walking hand in hand with Jesus ... remember it is a love relationship!

Is this where God is calling me?



As you record your reflections, your thoughts and feelings, you may find that **you want to talk personally with someone**. That's really great. Please do share what is going on with another...like Mary, the mother of Jesus, when you hear God's call there is a desire to share. Mary shared with her cousin Elizabeth who affirmed and confirmed Mary's experience of God's call. So find yourself an Elizabeth...an older more experienced person to share your experience with. This could be a vocations director or a spiritual director or another person that you know. (If you need help to do this [please contact us](#)).

Now take some time to reflect on this short passage from Matthew's Gospel. Jesus said: And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. ([Matthew 19:29](#))

If you sense that God may be calling you to follow in a more radical way, in an exclusive love relationship; calling you to be one of the few who will publicly declare your desire to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Can you say NO to his invitation to give all you are and have and follow him?

Your "yes" may be very tentative at this stage or it may be very bold or it may lie somewhere in between. Jesus deals with us as we are. He will only invite, never force. Sit with how you are feeling and what responses are coming to the surface. Before you continue on, you may like to go back to the [Prayer of Thomas Merton](#) or you may like to go the [reflection section](#) and sit in quiet for a while.

Today the variety of religious life can seem to be mind blowing. How do you find out which congregation is the best for you?

Again you need to **focus of your own inner call.**

Are you seeking a life where prayer is the "work"? A life where you will be part of the "power-house" for the rest of the Church and the world. A life where all things revolve around praying with a community several times during the day. A life that is one of silence and reflection. But at the same time a life where you help to support the community by the work of your hands.

If this sits with you, you will need to look at what Contemplative/enclosed religious life is about.

In Australia you have the choice of Benedictines (women and men), Carmelites (women and men), Poor Clares (Women), Cistercians (men). Look these up in the Directory.

[Read through what these are about and see if one or two seem to fit what you are seeking deep within.](#)

(If you are certain that it is a more active lifestyle that God is asking of you... for that is where you will be your best self the [click here](#))

After considering these options, which is the right fit for you? Is it still hard to tell? Take time to let the different ways of living the Gospel speak to you. Become aware of where you are drawn. What is it about this community that attracts you? Is there anything about this community that brings up anxiety or fear in you?

As you sit with what you have written, become aware of how God is calling you. Could it be to a Contemplative/enclosed way of life? If your answer is "yes", can you take the risk to contact the community that attracts you the most and talk to them about their way of life? This is the next stage of discernment. You need to talk with a Vocations Director. This can seem a bit daunting at first but well worth it. You can arrange a visit and get to know the Monks/Sisters more and become more familiar with their way of life.



If you feel you can't make contact at this stage then sit with this and see if you can work out what it is that is stopping you. In prayer, ask Jesus what he thinks!!!

If you believe that you may have a call to the vocation of deacon contact your local diocesan vocations office.