

Discerning Love: The Dynamism of Discernment

Discernment of spirits is actively the faithful response to God's love, the ultimate rule of the religious.

The formed religious should be so united with God in contemplation that discerning love is the only measure of prayer and mission: how much one studies, how much one prays, works and plays; how one fulfils the apostolic task, relates to the community and to those who call one forth.

This is the rule of the apostolic religious: discerning love.

Discerning love is the love received from the fullness of Christ's grace which leads us into the Father's heart.

It is the drawing-power of the Father's love revealed in Jesus, through which we are taken up into his life, so that we live from him, to him and for him; so that in all our prayer and action he is at work in us, entirely present by his Spirit.

In each of us this love dwells, by our baptism, by our eucharistic offering, by our consecration. Christ calls us by this love and leads us by this love, works in us by this love, lives in us by this love.

In order to remain in this love — that is, to see Christ clearly by faith, to share his life, and live it with him — we must seek him, see his beckoning, seek him and find him, dwell with him in this love, walk with him in this love. This is his gift to us: from him we have our being, through him we are reconciled, in him we know and choose.

To discern the spirits is to be led by the Holy Spirit: It asks for a readiness, an eager desire, a true response. It means that I look upon the face of my Father in Christ; It means that I am listening to Jesus as he promises to give me his Spirit for always.

Thus I enter into his thoughts and the innermost movements of his heart. It means that my fingers touch the wounds in his hands and side. It means that his hands are laid on my head, giving me his Spirit, sending me, as I say: Here I am, Lord, send me!

*So he is the one who whispers his 'yes' to me his disciple:
who opens the Scriptures for me, breaks the bread for me,
so that I may be with him as he heals his sick and teaches his little ones.*

*I know that it is in his light that I will see light:
the light of vocation, the light of shared charism:
the light of a life consecrated to the One who sent him,
and whose Spirit shapes me according to his image.*

*Discerning love is the self-determination of the disciple:
a freedom which is the freedom of self-surrender;
not a passive waiting, but an eager running after him,
one which he sustains when it tires, refreshes when it lags:
a joyful freedom whose need is fed by his daily bread,
whose thirst is quenched by his blood.
Thus he seals me with the seal of his Eucharist:
God's seal is on my arm, God's sign is on my forehead:
the sign of my consecration; I need no other.*

*In this discerning love, each brother and sister,
each moment of time, is absorbed in the one mission;
where each finds its own and proper place.
Under the guidance of this discerning love,
the apostolic life is the penetrating search
of one already caught up in God's saving design
which continues to unfold itself in my time and place.*

*Discerning love has its roots in faith — a growing, deepening awareness
that we are God's fellow-workers in his field full of folk.*

*With this discerning love we need few rules, few statutes:
Rather we need the freedom of God's Spirit, who leads his children
to fulfil his loving designs for his world.*

*This discerning love knows no measure.
It is not ruled by uniformity:
Its poverty is the impoverishment and enrichment
in the obedience, unto the Cross, of Jesus and Mary.
Its chastity is God's gift of his own compassionate heart.*

*Discerning love is essentially response to God's world-loving:
It demands mature acceptance of mission and sound judgment as to means.
Its conscience is delicate in all circumstances and cultures.
It releases spontaneity: it repudiates impetuosity.*

*It thrives on relationships, for it sees all as God given —
each one coming from him, going to him.*

*Each person is a blessing for the welcoming heart,
not for self-satisfaction, but for the sake of the other.*

Discerning love leads to God, leads the self to God.

*Discerning love sees as Christ sees, acts as Christ acts,
seeks as Christ seeks — union with the Father.*

*It translates human impulses and reactions,
desires and aspirations, into those of Christ himself.*

*And yet it is not calculated. It partakes of Christ's liberty:
'I am free to lay down my life, I am free to take it again'.*

Discerning love leads me to lay it at his feet.

The power he shares with me assures me that he will give it back to me;

Discerning love assures me that he is already returning it to me.

James Walsh