

Father's Notes

October 27, 2024

One of the key themes during my studies for priesthood was discernment. We learned that the etymology of the word means to sift or separate apart. An image that helps convey this are those prospectors searching for gold. Perhaps you think of Western movies or tv shows, but this is a real process that involves scooping muddy residue and rocks, while swirling the contents in a circle to find precious and hidden gold.

I like this image because it reminds us that discernment is not a simple task. It takes time, work and energy to find the gold, that is, God's loving care and direction in our lives. Discernment is not an act of impulse or relying on feelings. Authentic discernment looks at a topic or issue, and sits with it in prayer, weighing the outcomes and consulting those we trust. From here, we make a decision and if necessary, reevaluate and adjust as needed. That is how we discern, how we "strike gold."

If you don't know how to discern, start with prayer. Speak truthfully and unburden your heart to the Lord. Listen to what ideas move and stir you. Are they bringing you closer to God or not? Is there some increase of faith, hope or love? Or is there a movement away from these three virtues? It's essential to speak with someone whom you trust, that can help you sift through your discernment. Keep doing this until you arrive at a resolution and act on it. It's that easy!

I encourage you to spend some time on this question of discernment. How is Jesus asking you with your gifts and talents, with your life story, to know and love Him better? How is He inviting you to share your Catholic faith with family, friends and communities this week? What are the practical steps you can take to do this throughout the week?

God bless,
Fr. Ben Bray