

# The Inner Voice of Love

As we continue to develop in this Christian community, we also continue to help one another in discerning our personal vocations, or how we answer God's invitation with our lives. We also seek to attend to the truest desires and longings of our hearts and use those as compasses to recognize how God is at work within us.

In the context of Ignatian spirituality, 'Discernment of Spirits,' is what St. Ignatius Loyola called the "motions of the soul." These interior movements consist of thoughts, imaginations, emotions, inclinations, desires, feelings, repulsions, and attractions. Spiritual discernment of spirits involves becoming sensitive to these movements, reflecting on them, and understanding where they come from and where they lead us. Cultivating an ability to recognize and discern these interior movements is a very important spiritual practice and "life skill" for the spiritual journey. What St. Ignatius teaches us about all of those movements is the need to first recognize them. Sometimes the hardest part is being honest with ourselves about how we are inclined and whether we are capable of self-deception or denial. When we root ourselves in being God's beloved and ask God to accompany us on this inward journey, it is easier to be honest with ourselves. Once we recognize these interior movements, we must discern them. This involves holding them to the light of God and prayerfully listening for the truth about these movements...leading us to deeper understanding.

The Discernment of Spirits points to the reality that we do not always recognize right away which of our interior movements are animated by God to help us grow in faith or which are the result of human inclination to turn away from God and revel in life's cheaper, easier, shallower satisfactions. Discernment of Spirits is how we come to recognize God is working through our interior movements to draw us closer in love and relationship.

## **Scriptures**

Luke 11:9 – “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

Isaiah 11:2-3 – The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord – and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears.

Philippians 1:9-10 – And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.

## **Reflection Questions**

- *When in my life have I listened to the wrong voice? Can I recall the feelings and desires that arose within me? What led me away from God (or my best self)?*
- *In my own life now, where do I experience the Voice of Love is speaking and where do I think the Voice of Fear speaking?*
- *Which voice has most power over me? How do I recognize that influence?*