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**TO SEEK AND FIND THE WILL OF GOD [SE 1]**

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**VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT IN IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### 1. Ignatian Sources

Au	Autobiography: Autobiografía. Acta Patris Ignatii scripta a P. Lud. González da Câmara 1553 / 1555, FN I, Roma 1943, 354-507(MHSI 66).
FN	Fontes Narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis (4 vols.), Roma 1943-1965 (MHSI 66, 73, 85, 93)
MHSI	Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu.
Obras	<i>Obras completas de San Ignacio de Loyola</i> , editado por Ignacio Iparraguirre y Cándido De Dalmases. Madrid: BAC, 1963.
SE	Spiriutal Exercises: Ejercicios Espirituales. Exercitia Spirituality, Roma 1969 (MHSI 100)

### 2. Dictionaries

DEI	Grupo De Espiritualidad Ignaciana, ed. Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana. 2 vols. Mensajero – Sal Terrae, Bilbao – Santander 2007.
DHCJ	O'Neill, Charles y Domínguez, José María. <i>Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús</i> . 4 vols. Roma-Madrid: IHSI- UPCo, 2001.
DiccAut	Real Academia Española. <i>Diccionario de autoridades</i> (1767). 3 vols. Madrid: Gredos, 1990.

### 3. Others

ARSI	<i>Acta Romana Societatis Iesu</i> .
BAC	Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos
CAA	Contemplación para Alcanzar Amor (Contemplation to Obtain Love)
Cf.	Confer (véase)
CSCP	Consolación Sin Causa Precedente (Consolation Without a Previous Cause)
d.	Decree
Dir.	Director
ed.	Editor
GC	General Congregation

ibid.	Ibidem (ahí mismo)
<i>IHSI</i>	<i>Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu.</i>
n.	Number
PF	Principle and Foundation.
UPCo	Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Madrid.
Vs.	Versus

## INTRODUCTION

### An approach to the topic

«You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last» (Jn 15,16).

What is the significance of God's election? In the Bible, we encounter our God on mission for the salvation of whole humanity. In this context, God's choice and appointment for each one of us is to collaborate with him in his mission. To know God's will or God's choice for each one of us, we need an attentive listening to His call. Vocational discernment is a help to listen to his voice amidst all the noises around us.

Pope Benedict XVI, while talking about vocation, mentioned the words from the Bible, «The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable» (Rom 11,29) and says that each vocation is an earned grace from God and it remains indelible<sup>1</sup>. Even if a person remains unfaithful to spouse, the marriage is irrevocable. Similarly, though a priest is unfaithful to his priestly life, his priestly character is irreversible. Therefore, vocational discernment plays a prominent role in order to make a right and authentic election according to the will of God. In this context, vocational discernment finds its important place in Christian life.

Vocational discernment is a mixture of two terms that have independent meaning and significance in themselves. An independent understanding of the terms Vocation and discernment clarifies the meaning of vocational discernment.

According to *DiccAut*, vocation is an inspiration by which God calls us to some state of perfection, especially to that of religion<sup>2</sup>. In this definition, vocation is not a general or abstract term but a relational one. It has significance in relation to God. God's initiative is visible in the vocation of a person. According to Margaret Blackie, «Vocation is not something one crafts for oneself. It is something one responds to. Vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear»<sup>3</sup>. It is a human response to the call and mission of God. Christian vocation to married, religious, or priestly life is the will of God for each Christian individual.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Toni Witwer, "The grace of vocation and Charism in the Church", *The Way* 49 (2010): 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Real Academia Española. Diccionario de autoridades (1732), Tomo III. Madrid: Gredos, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Margaret Blackie, "Living an Ignatian Vocation", *The Way* 50 (2011): 51



On the other hand, to discern means, etymologically, to divide, separate or distinguish. It is to distinguish one thing from another, to know and judge the difference between the two<sup>4</sup>. From the point of view of Christian spirituality, it is to distinguish, among various alternatives, the will of God, to grasp it, to accept it and to do it<sup>5</sup>. Life provides us with various choices. Some come from God, and some are temptations of the evil Spirit. Therefore, it needs a delicate act of discernment to listen to the voice of God amidst the deceptions of the evil spirit.

The word discernment echoes its relevance during all the discussions on Christian spirituality. It makes its presence in different areas of spirituality, such as pastoral, mystic, dogmatic, or moral. Therefore, we can never take discernment lightly, saying that it is an appendix or a marginal compliment to spirituality. Discernment belongs to the very core of Christian spirituality<sup>6</sup>.

With this basic understanding of the terms vocation and discernment, I explore in this paper the vocational discernment in Ignatian spirituality. Within this topic, I would like to respond to: What is vocational discernment in Christian theology? How do the life of Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises help a person make vocational discernment? How do the recent writings of the Society of Jesus throw a light on vocational discernment? And what are significant elements of spirituality that are intrinsic to vocational discernment?

### **The motivation**

In the fast-growing digital world, which often dictates the thoughts and dreams of every individual, and amidst the drastic change and globalization in the post-modern era, our deepest desire to find meaning in life is systematically sidelined. During GC 32, Pope Paul VI said that the world in which we live puts our religious mentality and sometimes even our faith itself in crisis: we live in a dazzling perspective of profane humanism, combined with a rationalistic and religious criticism with which man wants to achieve his personal and social perfection solely through his own efforts<sup>7</sup>. In this changing ambience of our external surroundings and our thoughts and dreams, there is a need to maintain an environment that builds the future on the basic foundation of seeking and finding the will of God. And therefore, vocational discernment is the need of the hour today, since it helps each one to move on the path directed

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Real Academia Española. Diccionario de autoridades (1732), Tomo III. Madrid: Gredos, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. José Magaña, “La voluntad verdadera de Dios verdadero”, *Manresa* 54 (1982): 113.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Javier Osuna, “El Discernimiento”, *Apuntes Ignacianos* 76 (2016): 68-82.

<sup>7</sup> Pablo VI, “Alocución del Santo Padre a los participantes en la Congregación General XXXII”, in Congregación General 32, (Madrid: Razón y Fe, 1975), 252.

by God. Keeping this present context in mind, I have chosen the topic for my work: Vocational Discernment in Ignatian Spirituality. This work will help me personally to realize and deepen the richness of vocational discernment in Ignatian spirituality. At the same time, it will give direction to those who, deep down in their hearts, have a desire to shape their future based on what God wants from them.

### **The objective**

Vocation can be broadly distinguished as a lay vocation and a priestly (religious) vocation. In both of these vocations, the aim is to do the will of God. Vocational discernment is searching and finding state of life God calls us to live in. Since both states of life, either married or priestly (religious), require vocational discernment to know the will of God, this paper helps any person explore the biblical justification and Ignatian method of vocational discernment. It also helps to keep in mind the practical elements while making the discernment.

Concretely, this paper deals with the theology, method, and elements of vocational discernment. Firstly, I study the basic theology of vocational discernment through the vocational narratives in the Bible. Secondly, along with the example of vocational discernment in the life of Ignatius, I work on how the Spiritual Exercises guide us towards vocational discernment. Finally, with the help of contemporary documents of the Society of Jesus, I study the essential and practical elements of vocational discernment.

### **Status quaestionis**

Although I explore vocational discernment in the autobiography of St. Ignatius and his Spiritual Exercises of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there have not been many publications exclusively on vocational discernment during that time and almost until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although so much focus is given to vocation, vocational discernment is given less importance in the Bible. After the Second Vatican Council, it seems that much attention has been given to vocational discernment. Recent documents and works like «*Instrumentum laboris: Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*» of the Synod of Bishops published in 2018 and «*Christus vivit*» of Pope Francis published in 2019 are immediately accessible to understand the meaning and significance of vocational discernment today. Different articles on related topics such as discernment, vocation, accompaniment, election, etc. in the *DEI*, published in 2007, and in magazines such as *Manresa*, *The Way*, etc. are helpful to unfold a picture of vocational discernment in Ignatian spirituality. Luiz María García Domínguez's «Discernir la llamada»,

published in 2022, focuses on some elements of Ignatian discernment and the psychology of vocational discernment for the candidate who wants to be a religious or a priest. Though my paper focuses on vocational discernment in any state of life, some points from this work are helpful to develop my paper.

In addition to these contributions on vocational discernment, *La llamada en la Biblia* by Carlos Martini has been a help in studying what vocation is in the Old and New Testaments and in extracting vocational discernment from the Bible. There has been a study on the discernment of St. Ignatius in the book *Ignatian Discernment* by Pierre Jacob, which highlights the discerning life of St. Ignatius and contributes to my study on vocational discernment. The books *Ejercicios Espirituales de S. Ignacio: Historia y Análisis* by Santiago Arzubialde, *Comentario y explicación de los ejercicios espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola* by Ignacio Casanovas, and *Buscar y hallar la voluntad de Dios* by Miguel Ángel Fiorito contribute significantly to draw out elements of vocational discernment in the Spiritual Exercises. The recent General Congregations too have helped me to discover the current thinking of the Society of Jesus on vocational discernment.

### **Methodology and structure**

I have divided my work into three chapters based on theology, method and the contemporary elements of vocational discernment. The methodology of the work will be to proceed from the theology of vocational discernment to the present context, in which concrete elements of vocational discernment are dealt with.

Discernment of our vocation takes place within the theological ambience of Christianity. The Bible is the source of our theology. Therefore, in the first chapter, my focus is to search for the elements of vocational discernment in the Bible. First, I study the basic common elements of vocation in the Old Testament. Then, with the help of some vocational narratives, I extract the characteristic features of the vocation. Secondly, I study the meaning of vocation in the New Testament and the nature of Christ's calling. The call of Mary, the call of disciples and the conversion of Paul help me to extract the basic characteristics of vocation in the New Testament. Finally, with the information from the study of vocation in both the Old and New Testaments, I derive the elements of vocational discernment in the Bible.

The second chapter, which deals with vocational discernment in the experience of Ignatius of Loyola and in the dynamics of Spiritual Exercises, is central to my paper. The life of Ignatius

and the core of the Spiritual Exercises give an example and the method of vocational discernment, respectively. Ignatius' life after his conversion is a pilgrim's journey. Loyola, Montserrat, Manresa, Jerusalem, Paris, Azpeitia, Venice, Vicenza and Rome are important stations in his life. Each station is a platform for the next in his vocational journey. Among these, the first three places play a crucial role in shaping his personality to an extent that they transform him both externally and internally. These three stations give him the conviction to dedicate his life for Christ. Other stations keep purifying the way in which he has to serve Christ and help him to seek and find the will of God to elect a particular state of life and his destination. All these stations of his life are viewed as his vocational discernment in the first part of this chapter.

In the second part, I focus on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. From the point of view of my topic of discussion, I concentrate on the aspect of election in the second week of the Spiritual Exercises and deal with those exercises that are preludes to election. I also incorporate briefly how the first, third and fourth weeks too are related to vocational discernment.

In the third chapter, I focus on the echo of the vocational discernment of Ignatius in today's context. With the help of contemporary documents of the Society of Jesus, I deal with those elements that contribute to vocational discernment in contemporary times. I specifically focus on the ambience that nurtures vocational discernment, the knowledge and personal experience of God, and marching towards a coherent life. I also study the role of spiritual accompaniment in vocational discernment. Throughout this chapter, the focus is only on vocational discernment before electing a state of life.

### **Acknowledgement**

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## CHAPTER 1

### VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT IN THE BIBLE

«For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope» (Jer 29,11).

The Bible, as the Word of God, is God's revelation to his people. Through the narratives of the Old and New Testaments, God reveals his saving purpose to humanity. This process of the divine plan of salvation takes place through different stages in the Bible. God creates the world, chooses Israel as a sign, calls leaders, judges, kings and prophets to participate in his mission, and finally sends his Son Jesus as the fullness of His revelation. This shows that there is a close relationship between God and the people. The idea of the closeness of God was not strange in Israel<sup>8</sup>. God cared for the people by being close with them and by establishing a covenant with them.

A special feature that we find in the Bible is human cooperation with God's plan of salvation. In the Old Testament, God calls some persons frequently to lead the people of Israel, to send His message to them and to remind them constantly about His commandments. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, who is sent by his Father, proclaims the Kingdom of God and chooses some as his disciples to be with him and to be sent out on mission. After the death of Christ, the Apostles continue to proclaim God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

In the various stages of mission in the Bible, vocational narratives receive a prominent place as they play a significant role throughout biblical history. In this chapter, which is centred on the Bible, we study the basic common elements of vocational narratives, analyze some of them, and then extract some characteristic features of vocation. This will help to unfold some of the elements of vocational discernment in the Bible.

#### 1.1. Old Testament

##### 1.1.1. What is vocation in the Old Testament?

The Old Testament is the word of God about how God intervenes in the lives of people and how the divine plan of salvation takes shape through the course of history. We find a series of

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Santiago Guerra, "La Oscura cercanía del Dios de Jesús", *Revista de Espiritualidad* 57 (1998): 352.

call narratives in the Old Testament, each having its own uniqueness and special function. But, «en el origen de toda vocación hay una elección divina para llevar a cabo el plan divino de salvación»<sup>9</sup>. This divine plan of salvation begins with creation. The creation story<sup>10</sup> in the book of Genesis portrays the sovereignty of God<sup>11</sup>, who creates through the power of his word. Isaiah proclaims that this act of God is his act of calling (Cf. Is 48,13; 45,3-4; 48,12; 54,6)<sup>12</sup>.

Secondly, this divine plan of salvation is established through the election of the people of Israel. This election of God is not a goal (end) in itself but has a significant purpose. The people of Israel are elected to be signs among nations. They are also chosen to be witnesses of God's action, which would subsequently reveal the universal sovereignty of God (Cf. Gen 12,3; Is 42,6; 60,3; Sal 47,8-10)<sup>13</sup>.

This election can also be considered as consecration through which the people of Israel are invited to dedicate themselves to the service of God, to be available affectively and effectively, to live according to God's instruction and thus to enter into a covenant relationship with him<sup>14</sup>.

Thirdly, in order to make his plan of salvation more effective and concrete, God calls some persons, such as Abraham, Moses, Prophets, etc., from among the people of Israel for some specific purposes and responsibilities. The vocational stories of each individual in the Old Testament are unique and special and have a deeper meaning to communicate. Although at the outset they look straightforward, they are «complex and rich»<sup>15</sup>. Though they vary in content and explanation, they have some common elements. A brief study of these elements will help to understand the logic and structure of vocation in the Old Testament.

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<sup>9</sup> Constante Brovotto, "Vocación", in *Diccionario enciclopédico del cristianismo*, 2.<sup>a</sup> ed., dir. Roberto Herald Bernet (Madrid: San Pablo, 2009), 970-971.

<sup>10</sup> Gen 1,1-31 explains the creation story. Each one that God created was commanded by God. It was his Word through which He created. We find complementary source in Hebrews 11,3: By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Gabino Uríbarri, "Vocación", in *Nuevo Diccionario de Pastoral*, dir. Casiano Floristan (Madrid: San Pablo, 2002), 1594.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 1594.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. José Javier Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", in *Diccionario de Pastoral vocacional*, 2.<sup>a</sup> ed., dir. Eros Borile, Luciano Cabbia y Vito Magno (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 2005), 112.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>15</sup> Carlos M. Martini, *La llamada en la Biblia* (Madrid: Sociedad de Educación Atenas, 1983), 32.

### 1.1.2. Basic common elements in the vocation narratives of the Old Testament

Norm Habel has proposed a widely accepted model of the call narrative<sup>16</sup>. Though some of the call narratives, such as the call of Samuel, Elisha, etc. do not fit into Habel's model, most of them broadly agree with his model. According to him, there are six elements of vocation stories.

#### a. The Divine confrontation:

This is an essential element of every vocation in the Bible. We find a direct intervention of God in most of the vocation narratives, such as those of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. The vocation in the Old Testament is also intervened by God through a messenger, normally an Angel of the Lord<sup>17</sup>.

This divine initiative to call a subject is actualized through an apparition or manifestation of God. God manifests his presence through visions or auditions<sup>18</sup>. Divine manifestation takes place in the midst of daily activities (Cf. Ex 3,1-2), usually in times of crisis<sup>19</sup>. It is a sudden and unexpected experience of God that calls for a change or a transition in life of the one who has been called.

#### b. The introductory word

Introductory word could be a calling of name or using a phrase of salutation<sup>20</sup>. Calling someone by name or a phrase of appreciation creates a bond between the two. The introductory word of God is an indication that God wants to enter into a relationship with whom He calls. Although the introduction is a brief sentence, it invites the subject to participate in a dialogue that opens a relationship with the divine<sup>21</sup>.

#### c. The commission

The Hebrew verbs *halakh* (to go) and *shalah* (to send) are often part of the commission<sup>22</sup>. In general, the mission of the commissioned subjects is to elect and save Israelites. Within this

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Fred Guyette, "The Genre of the Call Narrative: Beyond Habel's Model", *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 43 (2015): 54. DOI: [https://jbnw.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/431/jbq\\_431\\_guyettegenre.pdf](https://jbnw.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/431/jbq_431_guyettegenre.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 114.

<sup>18</sup> Elicio Martínez, "Vocación", in *Diccionario teológico de la vida consagrada*, dir. Ángel Aparicio Rodríguez y Joan Canals Casas (Madrid: Publicaciones Claretianas, 1989), 1826.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 114.

<sup>20</sup> The introductory word in the call of Moses is calling out the name of Moses two times as «Moses, Moses!» (Ex 3,4) and in the call of Gideon the introductory word is a phrase of salutation as «The Lord is with you, valiant warrior!» (Jdg 6,12-13).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 114.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Guyette, "The Genre of the Call Narrative", 54.



broad horizon of the mission, very often, one is commissioned with a particular task of doing or saying something<sup>23</sup>. This divine commission gives a prophet, or a person who is called, the identity of being sent by the Lord. Based on this new identity of prophet, judge, leader, or king, the one who is sent speaks neither in his own name nor on his own authority. The power and authority with which he speaks are given to him by God, the one who calls him<sup>24</sup>.

#### **d. Objection by the person who is called**

Confused and frightened by the unexpected intervention by God, the subject has no straightforward yes to the call of God. Objection to the call of God is more frequent than unconditional availability in the Old Testament<sup>25</sup>. This objection, on the one hand, shows human insufficiency and unworthiness before the divine order, and on the other hand, it indicates the freedom of the person called to respond to the unexpected and unforeseen task, which involves difficulties and risks<sup>26</sup>.

#### **e. Confirmation**

God confirms his will to the one called with the assuring and encouraging words, «Yo estare contigo»<sup>27</sup>, which means «I will be with you». This expression is frequently linked to the words of God's supportive presence in life: «Do not fear; I am with you» (Is 41,10). These words are an indication that God neither condemns (downplays)<sup>28</sup> the objection of the person called nor is negative about the objection. The words of confirmation elucidate that the objection is part of the vocational process that looks for clarification and discernment.

#### **f. Sign**

It is closely linked to the words of confirmation. It is a guarantee given to the chosen one that it is God who has chosen him, speaks to him and sends him<sup>29</sup>. The sign could be an initiative on the part of the person who is called or granted by God unasked. It is integral to the appointment scene or takes place in the course of time in the future<sup>30</sup>. The signs could be God's assurance of his presence with the person who is called, as in the call of Moses (Cf. Ex 3,12),

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1827.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 114.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1827.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 114.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1826.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 114.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1826.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Hava Shalom-Guy, "The Call Narratives of Gideon and Moses: Literary Convention or More?", *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 11 (2011): 9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5508/jhs.2011.v11.a11>.

or the symbolic action of solemn consecration, as seen in the accounts of prophetic vocation (Cf. Is 6,6-7, Jer 1,9, Ez 3,1-3)<sup>31</sup>.

These above-mentioned basic elements of vocation narratives shed light on the purpose and mission of God in the Old Testament. A brief study of some of the vocation stories would enable us to understand the uniqueness of each vocation and the particular task of each person who is called in the universal divine plan of Salvation.

### **1.1.3. The vocation narratives of some of the personalities in the Old Testament**

#### **a. The vocation of Abraham**

Among the various individual calls that we find in the Bible, the call of Abraham acquires prominent place because the election of the people of Israel has a starting point in God's covenant with Abraham. But the term «Call» does not appear in the entire cycle of Abraham to indicate God's action in his life. The Spanish verb «Llamar» to signify vocation appears for the first time in the book of Isaiah<sup>32</sup>. In the chapters of the book of Genesis, which are centred around Abraham, we cannot find the phrase «God called Abraham». We only find «God said to Abraham», which would make us accept «Word of God» as the fundamental category in which vocation is situated<sup>33</sup>. Therefore, as in the creation story, in the call of Abraham «God said» statements are the way in which God chooses Abraham.

God said to Abraham, «Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you» (Gen 12,1). He has to give up his country, his homeland and his parental house. In other words, he has to give up his own identity<sup>34</sup>. The new name given to him by God as Abraham<sup>35</sup>, also indicates his new identity. He is presented with the path of emptying himself in order to accept the future reality of being the father of a great nation<sup>36</sup>. He is called to live a new life in a new place.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Martínez, «Vocación», 1826.

<sup>32</sup> «I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations» (Is 42,6). The letter to the Hebrews also refers to this event. It says that Abraham is called by God: «By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, and he set out, not knowing where he was going» (Heb 11,8); J. Kenneth Kuntz, «Calling», in *The Dictionary of the Bible and Religion*, dir. William H. Gentz (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 173.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Martini, 36.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>35</sup> «No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations» (Gen 17,5).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, «Biblia: Antiguo Testamento», 116.

Though there is a demand to give up the past, there is no particular responsibility before Abraham. It's a call to be rather than to do. He is not entrusted with the particular mission. He does not have any particular goal to fulfil. His goal is a journey of faith. That is why there is neither intervention nor resistance on the part of Abraham. There is total obedience and trust in the Lord, though the promised land is unknown to him<sup>37</sup>, as mentioned in the letter to Hebrews as: «By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going» (Heb 11,8). His vocation is open to the future<sup>38</sup>.

There is a constant dialogue between God and Abraham. It's a dialogue about relationship and friendship<sup>39</sup>. As part of this friendship, Abraham realizes what God wants from him and obeys God even at the cost of sacrificing his son, Isaac (Gen 22). Abraham emerges victorious in this test of God<sup>40</sup>, which creates an unbreakable bond between them. The call of God consists of a series of tests and challenges and thus expects constant faithfulness and discernment.

#### **b. The vocation of Moses**

The uniqueness of the vocation of Moses is seen as progressive evolution<sup>41</sup>. His vocation is a constant discovery of what God wants from him. There are three distinct stages in the life of Moses. He lived forty years in Egypt, forty years in Median and during his last forty years of his life, he was at the service of Israelites. The synthesis of three stages could be called as progressive evolution of his vocation.

During the first stage of his life, as a baby, he was saved from the waters by God's providence (Cf. Ex 2,1-10). This stage could be understood as the time of formation of expression, communication and action that social life requires. He also learned the wisdom of the Egyptians (Cf. Acts 7,20-22). But during this stage, he is far from the reality of the oppression of his own people, the Israelites<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1827.

<sup>39</sup> Abraham is mentioned as a friend of God in the book of Isaiah: « But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend» (Is 41,8). Elicio Martínez says, «Dios es el mejor amigo de Abraham»: Martínez, "Vocación", 1827.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1828.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Martini, 45.

<sup>42</sup> The Israelites were oppressed by Egyptians when Moses (though an Israelite) was taken care by the royal Egyptian family.

The second stage of his life begins with his contact with the reality of people. Seeing the misery of the Israelites, he wants to act as if he is responsible for them<sup>43</sup>. He kills an Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite (Cf. Ex 2,11-12). But then, on the next day, when he wants to resolve a conflict between two Israelites, he is confronted by one who says, «Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? » (Ex 2,13-14). He feels discouraged when he is confronted by his own people. He loses enthusiasm, flees to Median and wants to spend time in a solitary and withdrawn occupation to reflect on why this has happened to him and to purify himself from the blind trust of his own methods of rescuing the Israelites<sup>44</sup>.

It is at the beginning of his third stage of life that he discovers his true vocation, when God calls him from within the burning bush (Cf. Ex 3,1-21) to go back to Egypt as his instrument to rescue the Israelites from the oppression of Egyptians. At this juncture, Moses realizes that he is a useful man and that he had taken the wrong path<sup>45</sup> by considering himself responsible for the Israelites in Egypt. He discovers the fundamental feature of divine vocation: «la llamada es iniciativa exclusiva de Dios»<sup>46</sup>. Thus, the vocation of Moses can be considered a series of events that prepares him intellectually and socially in Egypt during the first forty years of his life and spiritually during the next forty years of his purifying time in Median.

As sent by God to Egypt, Moses considers himself God's instrument, and through his service, he becomes a servant of God<sup>47</sup>. His service is to cater to the immediate needs of the people<sup>48</sup>. It is also of responsibility<sup>49</sup>, of consoling others<sup>50</sup>, of prayer and intercession and of bringing word to the people<sup>51</sup>.

Contrary to the call of Abraham, here, the direct recipient of the divine intervention is the people of Israel and not Moses<sup>52</sup>. The role of Moses is to be a mediator between God and the

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Martini, 52.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 51-52.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 50-51.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Gregorio de Nisa, *Sobre la vida de Moisés* (Madrid: Editorial Ciudad Nueva, 1993), 235.

<sup>48</sup> Ex 15,22-24 and Ex 16, 2-3 describe the problem of water and the problem of bread and meat respectively. Moses, who had rescued the Israelites from dangerous Egyptians through a miraculous hand of God, now, though essential, attends to the simple need of the people: Cf. Martini, 59.

<sup>49</sup> As a responsible person, Moses realizes that he cannot manage the people alone and therefore he learns that he must allow himself to be helped by others: Cf. Martini, 60.

<sup>50</sup> Ex 14, 13-14: Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today, for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still".

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Martini, 61.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 117.

chosen people. But this responsibility builds his relationship with God. As a mediator, through his constant and face to face conversation with God, Moses becomes His intimate friend (Cf. Ex 33,11; Num 12,6-8)<sup>53</sup>. At the end of his life, after years of walking with the Lord, Moses achieves the intimacy of dealing with God<sup>54</sup>. An intimate relationship with God is a special blessing to those who respond to the call of God.

### **c. The vocation of Samuel**

The speciality of the vocation of Samuel is that it is shaped and nurtured through his mother's prayer<sup>55</sup>. This vocation is an example of how the prayers of parents play an important and decisive role. His mother, who believes that her son Samuel is a fruit of prayer, consecrates him to the Lord in the temple (Cf. 1 Sam 1,25-28).

The repeated call of God to Samuel indicates the urgency of God in making his word reach Samuel (Cf. 1 Sam 3,1-10). When there is a situation of ignorance and lack of familiarity, God persists insistently in his call. As in the case of the call of Abraham and Moses, this call also proves that vocation is always a divine initiative. But vocation is relational. God's urgency and initiative are not enough. The recognition of God's call and availability are essential elements in responding to the call of God<sup>56</sup>.

Recognizing the voice of God is essential to have clarity about one's vocation. In the call of Samuel, it is only when Samuel recognizes the voice of God that God begins to explain the purpose of the vision and mission. When we recognize the voice of God, we trust the words and follow the instructions with confidence.

There is no explicit mission<sup>57</sup> entrusted to Samuel during his vision of God. But, through the progression of his life, it is clear that he is called to bring the people together and make them united<sup>58</sup>. Apart from this, he becomes an important instrument in anointing the kings, namely Saul and David. The people recognize Samuel as a prophet. He becomes a charismatic leader who renews religious consciousness of Israel<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1829.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 117.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Martini, 74.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 118.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Martini, 75.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1830.

#### **d. The vocation of Jeremiah**

The vocation of Jeremiah is a divine call before his existence itself (cf. Jer 1,5). The divine primacy<sup>60</sup>, which is considered the identifying feature of vocation, takes place before Jeremiah is formed in his mother's womb.

Faith in early childhood is considered a receptive faith<sup>61</sup>, since it is received from parents. God has given Jeremiah the privilege of having been called and consecrated before he was formed in the womb. Therefore, Jeremiah receives an experience of faith and vocation directly from God from the beginning before God calls him<sup>62</sup>, as described in the first chapter of Jeremiah.

Consecration and sanctification are neither moral nor human perfection<sup>63</sup>. Purification is a necessary formative stage of every vocation, as this helps in discerning what God wants from the one who is called. In the case of Abraham, it takes place through a series of tests once he is chosen. In the case of Moses, it takes place through the evolution of his vocation. In the case of Jeremiah, it starts with an initial objection (cf. Jer 1,7). But God assures him of his support (cf. Jer 1, 8). Then he experiences purification through the bitterness and difficulties in the course of his prophetic journey (cf. Jer 20,11-18).

As assured by God that he would be with him (cf. Jer 1,19), Jeremiah focuses on the reform of moral conduct and justice (cf. Jer 7, 5-10). He receives the prophetic vocation of helping the people make the transition «from a cultic religiosity to a religiosity of the heart»<sup>64</sup>. The mission is to help people have personal contact with the Lord, rather than focusing on sacrifice and burnt offerings.

Jeremiah's mission is also to proclaim that it is not because of the justice of the people but because of God's merciful love that they will be saved (cf. Jer 31, 33-34). As in the Gospels, here Jeremiah proposes a salvation not based on one's own merit and human ability but because of the merciful love of God<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 118.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Martini, 81.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 118.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Martini, 87.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 87.

Since Jeremiah was called at a young age, he gets to know God through his mission. Therefore, the experience of Jeremiah is an inseparable intertwining of faith and vocation. Thus, Jeremiah becomes an example of vocations, in which vocational experience broadens one's own faith<sup>66</sup>.

#### 1.1.4. True and false Prophets

Among the various persons called by God at different time in the history of Israel, there are a series of prophets who have handled the responsibility of maintaining the faith of the people. If the kings were political leaders of Israel, the prophets were spiritually responsible<sup>67</sup>. The office of prophet was «to preach pure morality and the heartfelt worship of Jehovah (God), and to act along and co-ordinately with the priesthood and monarchy in guiding the state aright and checking all attempts at illegality and tyranny»<sup>68</sup>. The role of the prophets in general was to speak the words that came from Yahweh. In the call narrative of Jeremiah, it appears that God put his words on the lips of the Prophet (cf. Jer 1, 7-10)<sup>69</sup>. People readily accepted the prophets who walked with them and who kept reminding them of the ways of God.

A difficulty arose when many prophets who appeared before people with the message of God had contradictory words to communicate. This led to confusion about whether they were saying the truth and whether they were true prophets sent by God. Discernment between true and false prophets helps clarify the vocation.

Amos, who was prophesizing during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, spoke about the justice of the people. He pronounced against the popular and traditional religion, which was institutionalized in sacrifices and offerings. He observed pure externalities, which were not supported by moral conduct in social relations. According to him, God hates worship that is not backed by justice and as a consequence, God would punish Israel with an Assyrian Invasion<sup>70</sup>. Amaziah, the Priest<sup>71</sup>, condemned Amos as a false prophet. His criterion of truth was the one that was traditionally established. Later developments in biblical revelation clarified that the criteria used by Amaziah were insufficient. The Assyrian invasion was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Amos. These developments confirmed that he was a true prophet sent by God.

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<sup>66</sup> Cf., *Ibid.*, 89-90.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Rafael De Sivatte Algueró, "Criterio de Discernimiento entre el verdadero y falso profeta en el libro del profeta Jeremías" (Extracto de Tesis Doctoral, UPCo-Madrid, 2019), 24.

<sup>68</sup> M. G. Easton, "Prophet", in *Eastons Bible Dictionary* (USA: Thomas Nelson, 1897), 964.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. José Alonso Díaz, *Discernimiento entre el verdadero y falso profeta* (Madrid: PPC y EDICABI, 1978), 8.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. During 8th century BC, priests were officiating the offerings in the temple. While Prophets were substituting the priests in the function of guiding the people, the function of priests was confined to cultic duties.

There were so many prophets during the time of the prophets Hosea and Isaiah. They were the leaders of the people. While Hosea condemns the prophets and the priests for leading the people astray (cf. Hos 4,5), Isaiah condemns the priests and the prophets, who waver from drunkenness and stumble while rendering decisions (cf. Is 28,7). Micah condemns the prophets, who tell fortunes for money (cf. Mic 3,11) and who proclaim peace if they are fed and prepare to wage war against those who do not feed them (cf. Mic 3,5). Zephaniah says that the prophets of Jerusalem are treacherous and rude (cf. Zep 3,4)<sup>72</sup>. Ezekiel condemns the false prophets, accusing them that they prophesy out of their own imagination (cf. Ez 13,2). He says that their visions are false and their divinations a lie (cf. Ez 13,6).

There is a detailed explanation of false prophetism in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah says that priests and prophets alike practice deceit (cf. Jer 6,13; 8,10). The Lord says to Jeremiah that the prophets are prophesying lies in his name and delusions of their own mind. He has not sent them, appointed them, or spoken to them (cf. Jer 14,14; 23,25; 27,10.16; 29,9). Thus, from the words of Yahweh, Jeremiah realizes that false prophets are the ones who are not sent by God but are those who mislead people.

Jer 28 gives detailed clarity about the distinction between true and false prophets. It deals with the confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah. The background to this confrontation is Jeremiah's prophecy, which is recorded in Jer 26 and 27. His prophecy during the reign of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah (cf. Jer 26,1) was that the Jerusalem temple would be destroyed and made like Shiloh (cf. Jer 26,6) if the people did not listen to God and follow his law (cf. Jer 26,4). When Jeremiah communicates this message of Yahweh to the people, the priests and the prophets condemn him and call for his execution (cf. Jer 26,8). Again, during the reign of Zedekiah (cf. Jer 27,1), Jeremiah comes with God's word that Judah and all other neighbouring countries would be given to the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

Opposed to the announcement of Jeremiah, Hananiah claims that God promises the speedy restoration of Judah within two years (cf. Jer 28,3-4). The message of Hananiah was based on the traditional line of Isaiah and other prophets, as the Bible says that Zion can never fall<sup>73</sup>. At the outset, the prophecy of Hananiah seems to be filled with words of hope and salvation. Caught up between his prophecy of misfortune to Judah and Hananiah's prophecy of salvation,

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<sup>72</sup> Alonso Diaz, 16-17.

<sup>73</sup> It means that Zion can never fall: Algueró, "Criterio de Discernimiento entre el verdadero y falso profeta", 50.



Jeremiah goes by the criterion that one must wait for the fulfilment of the prophecy<sup>74</sup> as mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy. It says:

«You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord? If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed» (Dt 18, 21-22).

In fact, the prophecy of Jeremiah is fulfilled over time. Though Hananiah spread the message of hope and encouragement, it was not God’s message. This clarifies that not all the messages of hope, peace and encouragement are God’s messages. They can be deceptions emerging from one’s ego.

From the historical background, saving Israel is a divine plan of salvation and it is clear that God wants to save Israel. But what Hananiah forgets is that the people must be faithful to Yahweh. Application of past message to a new situation will not help to discern God’s will<sup>75</sup>. Fixing oneself to the tradition is an obstacle to read the signs of the time and discern the will of God at every moment of life. Jeremiah realizes from the message of God that the negative activity of God towards Israel is part of the ways in which he wants to save Israel. It is necessary to know that sometimes God can work with people in unique ways and can relate to them as he pleases<sup>76</sup>.

Based on the above examples of various prophets who brought the message of God to the people, there are some criteria to discern true and false prophecy. Janick Fortier divides them into hidden and visible criteria<sup>77</sup>. According to him, the hidden criteria are: true prophets are called by God, sent with a message from God and have stood in Yahweh’s council. These are hidden criteria because the call is a personal experience, which involves an encounter between God and the person who is called to be a prophet. There is a lack of human witness for this criterion. Similarly, a prophet receiving the message sent from Yahweh takes place outside the realm of historical investigation. When communication and meetings take place between God and the prophet, the latter is the only witness.

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>75</sup> Algueró, “Criterio de Discernimiento entre el verdadero y falso profeta”, 52.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>77</sup> Janick Fortier, “Discerning between true and false prophets in Jeremiah” (Tesis in Master of Theological Studies, Trinity Western University-Canada, 2022), 95-122.

Based on the visible criteria, according to Janick, a true prophet has personal godliness (he is a man of prayer and has a close relationship with God), focuses on non-profit ministry, is aligned with the scripture<sup>78</sup>, is aligned with the historical context and whose words are fulfilled.

Practically, both of these hidden and visible criteria, which highlight the difference between true and false prophets, are means to discern the vocation of whether one is truly called by God or not.

### **1.1.5. Characteristic features of vocation in the Old Testament**

After a brief study of the basic elements of vocation and individual calls in the Old Testament, the following characteristics of vocation stand out.

1. A vocation is observed as dialogical in structure and personal in experience<sup>79</sup>. God dialogues personally with the person whom he calls. In this dialogical structure of vocation, God takes initiative and allows a person whom he calls to enter into a relationship of faith and trust in God.
2. There is a relationship between singularity and universality that exists in every vocation<sup>80</sup>. It means that there is a calling of a particular person to fulfil the universal mission. All the examples that are dealt with above clarify the objective of every vocation. Though the call of Abraham appears to be a singular plan, it is an amplified plan of God for the salvation of humanity. Thus, a person receives a call in relation to the another. One is called so that everyone accepts an announcement from God<sup>81</sup>.
3. The call is fundamentally an invitation and not an imposition by God<sup>82</sup>. And so, the response is not blind obedience. Obedience takes place through a process of dialogue and discernment, which increases faith and trust in God, who calls. The one who responds to the call of God is convinced about the mission of God with faith and trust. He feels impelled by a powerful word that, without depriving him of freedom, reorients his life<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> The message of Prophet must be drawn from the commandments and teachings of God (Deut. 13,4) and should be theologically sound.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 114.

<sup>80</sup> Marcos Vinícius Sacramento de Souza, "La gracia de la vocación y la tarea de discernir la llamada" (Tesina de Licenciatura en Teología Espiritual, UPCo-Madrid, 2019), 26.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 114.

<sup>82</sup> Souza, "La gracia de la vocación", 26.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, "Biblia: Antiguo Testamento", 114.

4. A vocation is a change from a past lifestyle. «La vocación exige una ruptura con el pasado»<sup>84</sup>. It creates a new situation<sup>85</sup>. It indicates a separation from the existence that the follower has carried until now.
5. Based on the call of Moses, vocation is not an instant change that takes place within a person. Rather, it's a progressive understanding of the will of God. Through a process of some successive events, a person broadens his/her understanding of the call of God and opens oneself to the divine will in obedience.
6. The vocation is understood within the religious tradition of Israel. It cannot be understood apart from a current that runs through the religious history of Israel<sup>86</sup>.
7. The one who is called is seen as an authentic person, whose behaviour pattern and prospect must be such, which convinces the people that the call is coming from God. Others must see in him a true prophet.

## 1.2. New Testament

### 1.2.1. What is vocation in the New Testament?

To understand vocation in the New Testament, it is necessary to clarify the meaning and difference between universal and particular vocation. The word *kaleo* in the Greek Bible is translated as call. This Greek verb, *Kaléo*, with its derivatives, is rarely used to express particular vocations such as Jesus calling his disciples. Rather, it is used to express the general call of salvation, which was announced and carried out by Christ. For example, Jesus said, «I have not come to call the just, but sinners» (Mt 9,13; Mk 2,17; Lk 5,32) ». On another occasion, he says, «Many are called, but few are chosen» (Mt 22,14). Through these expressions, it is evident that Jesus calls everybody to partake in the joy of Messianic salvation<sup>87</sup>.

As in the Old Testament, where God chose Israelites as a sign of his covenant and called some particular persons to be at His service, the New Testament too deals with particular vocations (call of Apostles) within the ecclesial community. These particular vocations are at the service of the people who are called to respond to the universal vocation of faith, the only one that places us on the path of salvation<sup>88</sup>. Unlike the Old Testament, the main focus of the particular vocations in the New Testament is neither a prophetic mission nor a direct mediation between

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<sup>84</sup> Martínez, “Vocación”, 1827.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *El Precio de la gracia* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1968), 43-44.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Pardo Izal, “Biblia: Antiguo Testamento”, 114.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 122.

God and the people, but to be at the service of the people. It is a pastoral mission. It is about bringing Christ, the salvation, to the people<sup>89</sup>.

A great difference between vocations in the Old and New Testaments is that in the New Testament, God speaks to us through his Son (cf. Heb 1,2). Therefore, in the New Testament, vocations are essentially related to the person of Christ. Every Christian vocation is a vocation in Christ<sup>90</sup>. Christ, as the Son of God has the authority to call directly whom he wants in the mission of salvation.

Jesus, the Son of God himself, was sent by his Father as a fulfilment of the divine plan of salvation. Being fully human, he grew in awareness of his vocation and mission. He grew physically, psychologically and spiritually during his hidden life (cf. Lk 2,40.52)<sup>91</sup>, went through the process of baptism (cf. Mk 1,9-11) and had desert experiences (cf. Mt 4,1-11). But, is the vocation of Jesus similar to those of others in the New Testament? It does not seem to be. As a Son of God, he has an authority to forgive the sins of others (cf. Mt 9, 6) and call others to be with him and to be sent out (Cf. Mk 1,16-20; 2,14; 3,13; Mt 4,18–22; 9,9; Lk 5:1–11). Nevertheless, we can talk about the vocation of Jesus as an inspiration to follow him.

Deriving from the above idea of Christ's authority to call others, Christianity is a community that is called by Christ. Everyone receives a vocation to partake in the mission of Christ (cf. I Cor 1,24; Heb 9,15; Rom 1,6 Rom 8,28)<sup>92</sup>. Faith in Christ is an essential virtue of general vocation. All those who believe in Christ are called (cf. 1 Cor 1,2; Rom 1,7). The vocation is open to all in the New Testament because both Jews and gentiles are chosen (cf. Rom 9, 24). The community as a whole who are ready to accept Christ are called to the kingdom and glory of God (cf. 1 Thes 2,12)<sup>93</sup>.

Few are chosen among them, as we call them today, as priests and religious (particular vocations) to serve the people by directing them to Christ constantly and by helping them to deepen their faith in Christ. We have so many examples of particular vocations in the New Testament. Mary is called to be the mother (cf. Lk 1, 26.38) and Joseph is called to be the foster father of Jesus (cf. Lk 1,20-21). Jesus calls some particular men to be his apostles (cf. Mk 1,16-

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Martini, 120.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1837.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 1837.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. G. Bertram, "Vocación", in *Diccionario de la Biblia*, dir. R. P. Serafín de Ausejo (Barcelona: Editorial Herder, 1964), 2049.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Uríbarri, "Vocación", 1599.

20; 2,14; 3,13; Mt 4,18–22; 9,9; Lk 5:1–11). Paul and Barnabas are also called specifically to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ among the gentiles.

Let us now look into some of the particular vocations in the New Testament so as to know the special elements of vocation in them, as these will help in vocational discernment in the Church.

### **1.2.2. The vocation of Mary**

Among the various vocations that are recorded in the New Testament, the vocation of Mary resembles those in the Old Testament in its literary scheme<sup>94</sup>. It is God's call mediated by an angel Gabriel, the messenger of God, who appears before Mary with the introductory words, «Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you» (Lk 1,28). The angel does not offer his own words, but the words of the one who has sent him. Therefore, the one who really speaks with Mary is the Lord<sup>95</sup>.

This is followed by an interaction between Mary and the angel. Since it is a sudden call, Mary is disturbed (cf. Lk 1,29). But the angel says the words of reassurance, «Do not be afraid, Mary» (Lk 1,30). These words echo the assuring words of God in the Old Testament (cf. Is 31,10). This is followed by the communication of the purpose of vocation. Angel announces the birth of Christ, which will take place through her. Her mission is to give birth to Jesus Christ, the son of God. Then, suddenly, Mary is uneasy and presents before the angel a difficulty. She says, «How can this be, since I am a virgin? » (Lk 1, 34). This echoes an act of objection that we find in the Old Testament, as it is not a straightforward acceptance of the call of God. Then there is a confirmation and assurance that the birth would be from the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1,35), followed by a sign of God's blessing to Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1,36-37).

Up to here, the story is closely parallel to the vocational narratives of the Old Testament<sup>96</sup>. The response of Mary to the call of God proceeds further from the Old Testament calls. She says, «Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word» (Lk 1,38). Thus, Mary accepts the surprising announcement of the angel generously with faith that is full of humility<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Martínez, “Vocación”, 1846.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Corrado Baggioni, “María”, in *Diccionario de Pastoral vocacional*, dir. Eros Borile, Luciano Cabbia y Vito Magno page, 670, 2.<sup>a</sup> ed. (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 2005), 670.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Martínez, “Vocación”, 1846.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. M. Ponce, “María”, in *Diccionario de Teología*, dir. Cesar Izquierdo, Jutta Burggraf y Félix María Arocena (Navarra: Eunsa, 2006), 612.

In this process of God's communication to Mary, there is confusion, questioning and consent. These are the stages of the internalization of the call<sup>98</sup>. There is freedom for pondering and the discernment of the call. Her confession to be the handmaid of the Lord authenticates her dedication thereafter to give birth to the Son of God. Her response as the servant of the Lord shows that she is not the owner of the vocation but only a faithful servant<sup>99</sup>. Her commitment to be faithful to the call of God permanently is a perfect example of what it means to respond to the call of God. «She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ's disciples»<sup>100</sup>. In her vocation, shines the initiative and absolute primacy of God, to whom she responds in the obedience of faith<sup>101</sup>.

To be the Mother of God is a pure grace that she received from God because she was not chosen based on her merits. Grace, holiness and merits are not preconditions for divine choice but are consequences of it<sup>102</sup>. Merit consists of a response and complete surrender to God's will. The virtue of faithfulness makes vocations precious and sacred.

### 1.2.3. The vocation of Disciples

In the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus calls the twelve, who are generically called as «disciples»<sup>103</sup>. The account of the call of disciples, specifically the call of 'Simon and Andrew' (cf. Mk 1,16-18), 'James and John' (cf. Mk 1,19-20) and the call of Levi (cf. Mk 2,13-14) demonstrate the following scheme, presented by Santiago Silva<sup>104</sup> as:

1. Situation: Jesus manifests himself in the daily activity of those whom he wants to call.
2. Vocation: Jesus takes initiative, chooses them to follow him and invites them to continue his mission.
3. The following (Response): there is neither questioning nor hesitation on the part of the person who is called. There is a generous, immediate and unconditional response even at the cost of abandoning their family, profession and work instruments.

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. Baggioni, "María", 670.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 670.

<sup>100</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic exhortation Marialis cultus of His Holiness Paul VI: devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Ottava: Canadian Catholic Conference, 1974), n. 35.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Bruno Forte, *La vida como vocación: Alimentar las raíces de la fe* (Madrid: Narcea, 2014), 93.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Domiciano Fernández, "María", in *Diccionario teológico de la vida consagrada*, dir. Ángel Aparicio Rodríguez and Joan Canals Casas (Madrid: Publicaciones Claretianas, 1989), 1015.

<sup>103</sup> Luke and Paul call them as Apostles. But there is also reference to Apostles in Mt 10,2 and Mk 6,30: Martínez, "Vocación", 1838.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Santiago Silva Retamales, *Discípulos de Jesús y Discipulado* (Buenos Aires: San Pablo 2006), 108.

In the above episodes of the call of disciples, the term «follow me» stands out. According to Luiz Gonzales, «follow me» signifies, «Únete definitivamente a mí, para escucharme y servirme»<sup>105</sup>. It is a call to be in communion with Jesus and to participate in his mission.

The disciple's response to the call of Jesus is unconditional obedience. This total abandonment, this complete surrender of one's self to the person of Christ, supposes an illimitable confidence in him<sup>106</sup>. To go a little further, the response is an example of the relationship between obedience and faith. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, «No hay otra indicación de un camino que conduzca a la fe, al seguimiento; el único camino hacia la fe es el de la obediencia a la llamada de Jesús»<sup>107</sup>. According to him, both of the following statements are true and valid: «solo el creyente es obediente y solo el obediente cree»<sup>108</sup>. Obedience has to be seen as both a consequence as well as a presupposition of faith<sup>109</sup>. Therefore, both faith and obedience go hand in hand while responding to the call of God.

The call of Matthew (cf. Mt 9. 9-13), is an example of how God calls people of any social status, rich or poor, without distinction of merit and conduct of life. Tax collectors like Matthew were considered by the people to be public sinners. They must have had scrupulous consciences in the midst of their busy life<sup>110</sup>. Therefore, in the case of Matthew, the call of Jesus for him is also a time of purification and a moment of search for consolation, which takes place at the initial stage of formation while being with Jesus.

This is evident in the definitive and official election of the group of twelve apostles (cf. Mk 3,13-19; Mt 10,1-4; Lk 6,12-16), whom he had already called. It supposes that there has been a special time of formation in order that they may understand the demands of the vocation. This teaches that the vocation needs a time of nurturing and confirmation. It needs constant motivation so as not to run the risk of failing. Further verification and constant growth are part of the process of vocation<sup>111</sup>.

Accordingly, Mark presents that Jesus called the Twelve to be with him and to be sent out (cf. Mk 3,14). It involves both formation and mission. An apostle is not only called to learn a doctrine, to repeat what Jesus said and taught and to bring a message to the people. He is called

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<sup>105</sup> Martínez, "Vocación", 1839.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Paul Molinari, "Community: communion in Christ", *The Way supplement* 13 (1971): 37.

<sup>107</sup> Bonhoeffer, 38.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Settimio Cipriani, "Biblia: Nuevo Testamento", in *Diccionario de Pastoral vocacional*, 2.<sup>a</sup> ed., dir. Eros Borile, Luciano Cabbia y Vito Magno (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 2005), 125.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 125.

to be with Jesus. They must see what Jesus is doing and know what his intention is<sup>112</sup>. The reason why one is called by Jesus is a question that needs to be contemplated and it is part of the process of vocational discernment.

Since discipleship is to fulfil the mission of God, Giacomo Perego adds one more point to the vocation scheme presented by Santiago Silva. It can be stated as the mission entrusted to the disciples. The call is associated with a mission and responsibility. It is directed along the path of humanity<sup>113</sup>. In the pericope of the call of fishermen (cf. Mk 1,16-20), Jesus says, «I will make you fishers of people» (Mk 1,17). This suggests that in the mission of Jesus, one needs to have patience, accept possible failures, and risk their lives in the work. This also indicates that the objective of the call is always missionary<sup>114</sup>. The mission of the twelve is not simply a prophecy, an exercise of power, or a mediation between God and the people. It is an action of solidarity, compassion, sympathy, attending to the sick and the weak, casting out demons, etc. It is a pastoral mission of service to the people. It is taking Christ to the people<sup>115</sup>.

Discipleship involves abandoning the source of survival (work or occupation) and the social category (honour or status) that are visible in the environment in which we live<sup>116</sup>. It's a total detachment that is expected of a follower of Christ. An authentic disciple is one who abandons one's own projects to put his life at the service of the saving project of Jesus<sup>117</sup>. This is a test of the motivation of the follower of Christ, who is called to put Christ before himself in any decisions about fulfilling the mission of Christ.

#### **1.2.4. The vocation of Paul: Conversion as authentic vocation**

The vocation of Paul is predominantly observed as a conversion or a change of life. But it is not just a question of conversion or a radical change of life. It is an authentic vocation<sup>118</sup>.

Among the various ways through which God calls whom he wishes in both the Old and New Testaments, the call of Saul (who became Paul) is unique and exceptional in the sense that it calls for a change of destiny. It would have been disastrous if he had avoided this call<sup>119</sup> as he

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<sup>112</sup> Cf. Martini, 115.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Giacomo Perego, *Nuevo testamento y Vida Consagrada* (Madrid: San Pablo, 2010), 81.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Settimio Cipriani, "Biblia: Nuevo Testamento", 124.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Martini, 120.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Retamales, 91.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Martínez, "Vocación", 1841.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Settimio Cipriani, "Biblia: Nuevo Testamento", 131.



was heading to Damascus to imprison the followers of Jesus Christ and to take them to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 9,2).

Though it's a call of God through a conversion process, God has a plan for each one when He chooses from the mother's womb. Paul himself says, «God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles» (Gal 1,15-16). God has his own way and an appropriate time for calling each one for his mission. Therefore, the vocation of Paul is a response to the precise plan of God<sup>120</sup>.

It is also realized from the call of Paul that the vocation is not an occasion to fulfil one's needs. The call of God cannot be a means to look for one's own glory, as he says, «For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus's sake» (2 Cor 4,5)<sup>121</sup>.

God's call is beyond human calculations and countless projects. Paul says, «Whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ» (Phil 3,7-8). God's call invites one to surrender oneself completely to obedience beyond one's own plans. Following Jesus does not involve one's own path to God's mission. It is a call to find the will of God in the vocational journey to fulfil what God wants from us.

God's call to Paul is not an independent vocation but a vocation to be part of the Church in carrying out the mission. It needs verification from the Christian community and therefore he must go to the city, where he will be told what to do (cf. Acts 9,6)<sup>122</sup>. It is also merged with regaining his sight, as he was made blind by God during his conversion, a sign of calling from God. Accordingly, Ananias, who was responsible for the community, officially introduces him to the Church, saying, «Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit» (Acts 9,17). Immediately after that, something, like a scale, falls from Saul's eyes, and he is able to see again (cf. Acts 9,18)<sup>123</sup>. The divine sign of losing and gaining sight affirms his

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>121</sup> Antonio Pavía, *Llamada y misión de Pablo* (Madrid: San Pablo, 2008),29.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Settimio Cipriani, "Biblia: Nuevo Testamento", 131.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 131.

vocation to be part of the mission of the Church. Thus, the vocation of Paul is an example of the way in which the call of God must be understood while reflecting vocational discernment.

### **1.2.5. Characteristic features of vocation in the New Testament**

The vocation narratives in the New Testament, which reflect Christ's special call to the chosen ones, demonstrate the following characteristic features:

1. The vocations in the New Testament are initiatives of Jesus, who intervenes in the lives of people and calls them directly. The New Testament also has examples of vocations that, even after death and resurrection, Jesus directly calls to whom he wants (the vocation of Paul). Referring to the call of Paul, Toni Witwer says, «Paul came to understand that it was not so much he who sought God and defended faith in God, but rather that it was God who constantly sought him and wanted to meet him and come close to him through Jesus Christ»<sup>124</sup>. There are some exceptions, such as the vocation of Mary, Joseph, etc., prior to the birth of Christ. They are like those in the Old Testament, in which God calls them directly or through mediators (angels). There are also others who, inspired by the messages of Christ, preach Him and follow his ways (cf. Acts 6,9-14). It is not uncommon after the death and resurrection of Jesus. But prominently, the New Testament elaborates the vocational narratives as Jesus directly calls them.
2. In the New Testament, we find Jesus' mission as a universal call to salvation. This is addressed to all the people who are invited to partake in it through their faith in Christ Jesus. Within this scope of universal vocation, some are called particularly to serve others so that God's plan of salvation may be known to all and carried out by those who respond in faith<sup>125</sup>. In this way, the vocation in the New Testament has a missionary dimension.
3. As the particular vocations are the initiative of God, it might happen sometimes that some are self-called (autollamados)<sup>126</sup>, but are not called by God. They must find their true place in the body of Christ, which is the Church (cf. Col 1,24)<sup>127</sup>.

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<sup>124</sup> Witwer, "The Grace of Vocation", 12.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Settimio Cipriani, "Biblia: Nuevo Testamento", 131.

<sup>126</sup> Some are self-called in the New Testament and are not called by Jesus. For an example: In Luke 8, 26-39, a man who was possessed by demon is healed by Jesus. He begs Jesus that he might be with him. But Jesus asks him to return home and proclaim what God has done to him.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Settimio Cipriani, "Biblia: Nuevo Testamento", 132.

4. The call of Christ is a free gift that comes from the free love of God<sup>128</sup>. But there is freedom in responding to the call of God. The rich young man, after listening to Jesus, who asked him to sell everything in order to follow Jesus, went away sad, for he was not ready to give up his possessions (cf. Mk 10,17-22). Therefore, not responding to the call of God means excluding oneself from the plan that God has for us<sup>129</sup>.
5. Those who accept the call and follow Jesus have certain demands to be met. Jesus says, «If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me» (Mt 16,24). Following Jesus is a life of sacrifice that is lived while walking in a narrow path.
6. Those who are called need constant and intimate familiarity with Jesus in order to be effective in responding to the call of God. The two disciples, who show their willingness to follow Jesus, ask Jesus where he is staying. The response of Jesus, «Come and see» (Jn 1,39), indicates the necessity of knowing Jesus to be his fruitful instrument. If we do not have a deep experience of Christ, we cannot transmit Christ to others. Being with Jesus and experiencing him has a formative value, which is essential to be fruitful disciples.
7. Vocation comes from above (God) but is authenticated by the believing community<sup>130</sup>. Paul's conversion as the vocation to be the Apostle of Christ<sup>131</sup> is authenticated by Ananias, who was responsible for the Christian community during his time. This communicates the message that vocational discernment takes place within the ecclesial community.

### 1.3. Elements of vocational discernment in the Bible

As discernment is searching and finding God's will, it is necessary to discern whether the vocation is initiated by God. The discernment by which a person enables himself at each moment to know what God wants of him is absolutely necessary in order that the person's response to God always goes in the direction of the call, and thus all his conduct is presented as pleasing to God and can also be pleasing to others<sup>132</sup>.

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<sup>128</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>131</sup> Eight times in the New Testament, Paul calls himself as an Apostle of Christ (Gal 1,1; Rom 1,1; 1 Cor 1,1; 1 Tim 2,7; Acts 26, 12-18; 1 Cor 15, 3-10; Gal 2,8; 1 Cor 9,1-2).

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Jesús Luzarraga, *Espiritualidad bíblica de la vocación* (Madrid: Paulinas, 1984), 248.

Vocational discernment becomes more significant not only because of the natural demand to know the will of God but also because of the imperative urgency of discerning between true and false prophets<sup>133</sup>. The discussion about true and false prophets opens a debate about the discernment of motivation. It is a discernment of whether one is truly called by God or has disordered motivation to fulfil personal needs supposedly in the name of God's call.

While elaborating on vocational discernment in Bible, Jesus Luzarraga mentions the diversity of spirits. Quoting the words of St Paul, he reminds us that the bad angel can clothe himself as an angel of light (cf. 2 Cor 11,14). That is why Paul, who exhorts us not to extinguish the charism and the spirit, makes a call to test these spirits, to discern them, and calls for a continuous posture of discernment in order that we may find God's will in the vocation<sup>134</sup>.

The particularities, singularities and diversity of vocations that we find in the Old Testament, which have uniqueness, become a matter of discussion. Certainly, we cannot deny the possibility of God raising special, new and diverse vocations. But the question arises because those vocations do not fit into a common picture but are isolated, even though we can draw common elements and features. Therefore, when singularity arises, there could be a lot of illusion and fantasy and a search for something, which need not be the word of God but rather one's own unconscious need<sup>135</sup>.

In the example of the call of Abraham, apart from him, who himself is the focus of his new identity and who is not given a particular responsibility but is promised that his name would be made great (cf. Gen 12,1-3), other vocations directly communicate the universal purpose of God's invitation. Generally, in the Bible, responding to God's call is always for His mission of human salvation. It is not ego centred but it is closely linked to the community. Though the call of Abraham seems to focus on himself, it is not so because Abraham becomes the starting point of new universal reality<sup>136</sup>, which is also considered part of God's plan of salvation. It comes under the community category, as St Paul says, God made his promise to Abraham and to his descendants (cf. Gal 3,16). But it opens the topic of discernment, whether one is called by God or not.

Vocational discernment includes the word of God as an identification feature. The one who is called is invited to recognize the word of God and the voice of God. Any other word, as

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Martini, 43.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 43.

happened with Eve (cf. Gen 3,1-7), who listened to the word of the serpent, can mislead and direct us away from the divine plan of salvation.

Vocational discernment involves dialogue between God and the one who is called by Him. It is not influenced by the opinions of others. It is one-one discernment between God and subject, as in the case of Abraham, Moses, Mary, etc. This implies that the discernment of vocation has to take place in conversation with God, which we call meditation or contemplation today. Others may help us in vocational discernment to recognize the voice of God, as did Heli to Samuel (cf. 1 Sam 3,1-21).

In the vocational journey, the one who is called undergoes purifying tests as they form his personality and help to be available to what God asks, although there are failures<sup>137</sup>. The purifying stage of every vocation has a formative value, as this helps in discerning what God wants from the one who is called. In the case of Abraham, it takes place through a series of tests (cf. Gen 15,1-6; 18,1-8; 22,1-12) and in the case of Moses, it takes place through the course of evolution of his vocation. Jeremiah experiences it through the bitterness and difficulties in the course of his prophetic journey (cf. Jer 20,11-18).

Responding to God's call also has pains and difficult moments. But ultimately, discernment consists not in delight but in consolation, the consolation of obedience and faith. The response of Matthew to the call of God not only makes him renounce his previous project of tax collection but also illuminates in him a deep spirit of self-improvement. This generates a joy of sharing and not sadness. The banquet organized by Mathew was to celebrate the joyful event of his call<sup>138</sup>. Though Matthew has to break with the normal rhythm and dreams of the past, there is a sense of deeper satisfaction. Thus, vocational discernment involves discerning the consolations that give a deep sense of joy while responding to the call of God. A discerning person responds to the call of God freely in consolation and joy. Vocational discernment is choosing the one that we understand as God's will for us. It gives consolation despite sacrifice.

The vocation in the Bible is in continuous progression, for which discernment is necessary. The mission of those called by God varies according to the rhythm of the will of God<sup>139</sup>. Therefore, vocational discernment takes place during the process of continuous faith and dedication to the mission of God, as Robert E. Doud says, «Finding one's vocation is a lifelong process and not

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Settimio Cipriani, "Biblia: Nuevo Testamento", 125.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Luzarraga, 250.

simply a decision made definitively in the earliest phase of one's life»<sup>140</sup>. Also, the preparatory document for the 15<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme “Youth, faith and vocational discernment”, to take place in October 2018, says,

«Vocational discernment is not accomplished in a single act, even if, in recounting the development of a vocation, identifying specific moments or decisive encounters is possible. As for all important things in life, vocational discernment is a long process unfolding over time, during which one continues to monitor the signs used by the Lord to indicate and specify a vocation that is very personal and unique. The Lord asked Abraham and Sarah to leave their country, but only in a gradual process — not without mistaken steps — which clarified what was initially a mysterious “land that I will show you” (Gen 12,1). Mary herself makes progress in the awareness of her vocation through meditating on the words she hears and the events which took place, even those she did not understand (cf. Lk 2,50-51) »<sup>141</sup>.

Vocation cannot be separated from habitual dialogue with God and sensitivity to the needs of the Church. The aptitude or suitability to follow a certain path, the purified intention and acceptance by the ecclesiastical authority are internal and external signs that can validate the authenticity of the vocation. Therefore, St Paul, after his conversion experience that took place through his dialogue with the voice of Jesus on the way to Damascus (cf. Acts 9,1-9), meets Ananias, who baptizes him (cf. Acts 9,18). Regarding his teaching, he submits himself first to Peter and later to other apostles and leaders (cf. Acts 11,15). Paul states that to preach something other than what the Church proposes would be to run in vain (cf. Gal 2,2). One receives a vocation from God for His mission. This has to be actualized within the unity of the Church that God himself has founded. And so, a vocation is said to be authentic if it flowers through a discerned conversation with God and is accepted within the ecclesial community.

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<sup>140</sup> Robert E. Doud, “Our Vocations: Novelty and Commitment”, *The way* 61 (2022): 31.

<sup>141</sup> Preparatory Document for the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops- 13.01.2017, Consulted on 18 of November, 2023, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2017/01/13/170113a.html>.



## CHAPTER 2

### VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT IN THE EXPERIENCE OF ST IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA AND IN THE DYNAMICS OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

#### 2.1. Vocational discernment in the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola

The Autobiography<sup>142</sup> of St. Ignatius is a raw text that reveals, in general, his life from the time of his conversion after his injury at the battle of Pamplona in 1521. It focuses on answering the question of how God led him after his conversion<sup>143</sup>. Realizing that it is God who is guiding him, he focuses on seeking and finding the will of God. This is undoubtedly called as his vocational discernment. As time passes, his personal relationship with Christ gets deeper and deeper. When he constantly asks himself, what God wants from him, his relationship with God keeps growing.

Though the autobiography briefs his entire life after his fall during the battle at Pamplona, his recuperation at Loyola and spiritual journey at Manresa play a major role in his vocational discernment. It is in Loyola and Manresa that Ignatius experiences conversion and purification in and through his inner struggles between delight and content, scruples and illuminations, consolations and desolations, etc. His life journey after the spiritual experience in Manresa keeps discovering his state of life and confirms his destination. The following sections deal with those moments and elements of his vocational discernment.

##### 2.1.1. The significance of «Los Pensamientos» (the thoughts)

Thoughts are inner movements and memories that shape the decisions of our life. While Ignatius is recuperating in the tower of Loyola after being wounded in the battle of Pamplona,

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<sup>142</sup> In fact, the propriety of considering the Ignatian text as autobiographical has been discussed. It can be said that the Ignatian account is not an autobiography in the strict sense of the word, since it does not attempt to narrate his life but rather discloses how God guided him. In addition, the text is the answers of Ignatius to the questions of his Jesuit companion Luis de Camara during their conversation in 1555. Keeping this in mind, the critical edition of the text bears the Latin title *Acta*. The different editions and translations of the text have the common title *autobiography* with different subtitles such as *Memoirs*, *Testament*, *Confessions*, *Pilgrim's Tale*, *The Pilgrim*, etc.; Josep M. Rambla, "Autobiografía", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 199.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 199.



he feels forced to read *Vita Christi*<sup>144</sup> and *Flos Sanctorum*<sup>145</sup>, as there are no other chivalrous books to his liking. Reading these books becomes the starting point of his conversion and subsequently his vocational discernment. The pages of the books that initially turned quickly slow down gradually, given the fact that the words in the books become meaningful for him to pause and reflect. In the desperate, sad and restless inner world of Ignatius, these books start giving him peace and serenity little by little, just like the water drops fall on the dry land that thirsts for water. Ignatius feels as though he is dragged away from the external chaos of warfare, honour, pride and competitiveness to the periphery of life, where there is less exposure to glorious life and less human contact. Slowly he begins to realize that this is the first step towards discovering his true centre, where God resides. The boring and irritating silence that he experiences, soon seems to be interesting and soothing. As the negative sentiments are replaced with positive feelings due to the reading of those books, Ignatius starts thinking about his internal whereabouts.

Thoughts are not ordinary movements or ideas produced in the mind. Thoughts have the power to transform, guide, and liberate<sup>146</sup>. José Ignacio Tellechea says that the process of thinking is a step inward that takes place in silence<sup>147</sup>. The thoughts of Ignatius get activated in silence and serenity while he reads the books. It is mentioned in his autobiography as follows:

«For in reading the life of Our Lord and of the saints, he stopped to think, reasoning within himself, “What if I should do this which St. Francis did, and this which St. Dominic did?” Thus, he pondered over many things that he found good, always proposing to himself what was difficult and burdensome and as he so proposed, it seemed easy for him to accomplish it. But he did not more than argue within himself, saying, “St. Dominic did this, so I have to do it; St. Francis did this, so I have to do it.” These thoughts

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<sup>144</sup> *Vita Christi* is the masterpiece of Ludolf of Saxony, a Carthusian monk, which contains more than a million words and attempts to present a complete account of the life of Christ, incorporating the four Gospels. Ignatius reads the Spanish version of the book translated by Fray Ambrosio Montesino: Paul Shore, “Ludolfo de Sajonia”, in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1150-1151. It was published in Alcalá around 1502 or 1503: Candido de Dalmases and J. Escalera, “Generales de la CJ: Ignacio de Loyola”, in *DHCJ*, dir. Charles E. O’Neill and Joaquin M. Dominguez (Roma-Madrid: IHSI- UPCo, 2001), 1596. This book softens the hardness of the heart. It illuminates understanding and straightens the will. It provokes tears and all the contempt of the world. It is no wonder that this book instilled consolations in Ignatius in times of his sadness: Rogelio Garcia Mateo, “La Gran mutación de Inigo a la luz del Vita Christi Cartujano”, *Manresa* 61 (1989): 34.

<sup>145</sup> The book *Flos Sanctorum* is the popular name. It is the *Legenda aurea* of the Dominican friar Santiago de Vorágine. It offers a series of extraordinary feats of the saints that encourage the believer to live the faith heroically. According to P. de Leturia, Ignatius read the Spanish edition of the book popularly known as *Flos Sanctorum*. This edition was adorned with vignettes (a short piece of writing or acting that clearly shows what a particular person, situation, etc. is like: Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>) about the life and the miracles about the saints. Though at first Ignatius did not seem interested in a particular saint, then his attention was on St Dominic and St Francis of Assisi: Rogelio García Mateo, “*Flos Santorum*”, in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 886-887.

<sup>146</sup> From the class notes of Prof. José García de Castro.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. José Ignacio Tellechea, *Ignacio de Loyola, solo y a pie* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1992), 101.

also lasted a good while; then, other things coming in between, the worldly ones mentioned above returned, and he also stayed long with them. This succession of such diverse thoughts lasted for quite some time, and he always dwelt at length upon the thought that turned up, either of the worldly exploits he wished to perform or of these others of God that came to his imagination» (Au 7).

Though it appears as if the thoughts are leading him to do as other saints have done, the return of his thoughts of a chivalrous journey of glory and pride creates confusion. Therefore, there is no solution yet to what he has to do due to his chaotic thoughts. The thoughts themselves do not lead to the solution of serenity from the inner restlessness, since thoughts are a chaotic mixture until they are identified and distinguished. Similarly, Ignatius continues to be restless while experiencing chaos in his thoughts as he reads the above-mentioned books. But this chaotic situation is not a problem for vocational discernment. It is a part of it. Because, in the depths of inner thoughts, there is a solution, just like in the chaos of noise, there is a voice. What is required is patience, which can lead a person to identify and distinguish each and every thought that moves in the chaotic mind. Ignatius slows down and the feelings that arise lead him to a possible solution.

### **2.1.2. The relationship between thoughts and feelings**

In the process of vocational discernment of Ignatius, a constant focus on thoughts is followed by an experience of feelings. Marko Ivan Rupnik says that thoughts are recognized precisely because of the feelings they arouse and vice versa<sup>148</sup>. Thus, the feelings that arise help Ignatius recognize and distinguish the chaotic thoughts. The autobiography says,

«When he was thinking of those things of the world, he took much delight in them, but afterwards, when he was tired and put them aside, he found himself dry and dissatisfied. But when he thought of going to Jerusalem barefoot, and of eating nothing but plain vegetables and of practicing all the other rigors that he saw in the saints, not only was he consoled when he had these thoughts but even after putting them aside, he remained satisfied and joyful» (Au 8).

His distinct feelings of delight and consolation are stimulated by his distinct thoughts. He realizes that the delight that he experiences due to the thoughts of those things in the world is temporary and the consolation that he experiences due to the thoughts of going to Jerusalem is lasting. The temporary delight provides initial pleasure but gradually leads to dryness (desolation). But the lasting happiness that comes from the consoling thoughts leads to inner satisfaction (consolation). This is the distinction between consolation and desolation. It is stated

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. Marko Ivan Rupnik, "Pensamientos", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1444.

by Ignatius in the fourth rule discernment for the first week<sup>149</sup> of the *Spiritual Exercises* as: «Just as consolation is contrary to desolation, so the thoughts which arise from consolation are likewise contrary to those which spring from desolation» (SE 317).

When Ignatius starts distinguishing his thoughts based on consolation and desolation, his eyes are opened a little and gradually, he is able to understand where they come from. The autobiography says: « Little by little he came to recognize the difference between the spirits that were stirring, one from the devil, the other from God» (Au 8)<sup>150</sup>.

Pope Francis says that this way of following consolation is listening to the heart. Ignatius has his first experience of God by listening to his own heart, which shows him a curious inversion: things at first sight attractive leave him disappointed and in others, less attractive, he feels a peace that lasts in time<sup>151</sup>.

This is the first time Ignatius perceives the hand of God in his life as he distinguishes the thoughts that come from the good spirit and the evil spirit. He realizes that it is only possible to identify the motions as consolations when they come from God and give satisfaction, even after putting aside the thoughts that cause them.

### **2.1.3. The divine signs as confirmation of his initial stage of vocational discernment**

Now that Ignatius has realized that he has to choose what comes from the good spirit, i.e., to do what other saints have done, he almost opens his new chapter of life. He wants to go to Jerusalem as soon as he recovers. But he receives confirmation of this decision through a vision. The autobiography says: «One night, while he was awake, he saw clearly an image of Our Lady with the Holy Child Jesus. From this sight, he received for a considerable time very great consolation» (Au 10). At the moment of this experience, as Ribadeneira says, there was

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<sup>149</sup> What is the role of the rules of discernment in the *Spiritual Exercises*? All the rules for feeling and knowing in some way the various motions that are caused in the soul [SE 313-336] are oriented towards the identification of the experience of consolation and its opposite. Once it is identified, it leads to freedom in decisions, which orient the person on the path of the Spirit.: Jose Garcia de Castro, *El Dios Emergente: sobre la «consolación sin causa»* (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2001), 113.

<sup>150</sup> Camara observes that this experience of good and evil spirit gives Ignatius a clarity while producing spiritual Exercises. He says, «Este fue el primero discurso que hizo en las cosas de Dios; y después, quando hizo los ejercicios, de aquí comenzó a tornar lumbre para lo de la diversidad de espíritus»: *FN I*, 372,374; Terence O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Contexts, Sources, Reception* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2021), 147.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Catequesis sobre el discernimiento, Papa Francisco, Consulted on 09 January 2024, [Catequesis-sobre-el-discernimiento20230113171737230475.pdf](#).

a divine sign. A big explosion was felt throughout the house and in the room where Ignatius was trembled<sup>152</sup>. This sign is God's special gift to Ignatius. It's a sign of what God will make of him in the future. A great consolation that he receives while seeing the image of Our Lady with the Holy Child Jesus becomes an initial confirmation of God's plan for his life. Thus, his chaotic thoughts, through a process of consolation and desolation, lead him to choose what other saints had done.

By this time, his inner world has already begun his conversion. But wounds alone do not convert a person<sup>153</sup>. Wounds can pause a person's life to go through what is going on within, dialogue with the thoughts, distinguish the feelings and find God's will. But this is just an initial process. He has to purify his soul to be converted deeply. Because his soul is still blind (Au 14).

#### **2.1.4. The importance of information in vocational discernment**

Ignatius is a person of quick action. As soon as he is convinced of himself after his conversion that he has to serve Christ in Jerusalem, he thinks about what he has to do after returning from Jerusalem. What does God want from him- the apostolic life or the contemplative life, like the Carthusians?<sup>154</sup> He has in mind that he would enter a Carthusian house in Seville to live a simple life like them, eating only vegetables. He wants to get enough information about the rule of the Carthusians as part of his discernment before joining their way of life in the future. He is glad of the information he gets because the information seems to be good. But the good information itself is not the end of discernment, for he knows that he has to do greater penances for his past sins. But when he weighs the number of penances that he wants to do against the Carthusians way of life, his feeling of joining the Carthusian monasteries cools off (Au 12). He realizes that he is up for tougher penances than what the Carthusians provide him. Though he does not completely rule out his desire to join the Carthusian monks, he gives attention to greater things through discernment. But what stands out in this experience of Ignatius is the importance of information in vocational discernment.

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<sup>152</sup>Cf. *FN IV*, 91-93.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Tellechea, 101.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Pierre Jacob, *Ignatian discernment* (Anand: Gujarat sahitya Prakash 2001), 173.

### 2.1.5. External spiritual practices that maintain consolation

Vocational discernment focuses on the stability of consolations while seeking and finding the will of God. Though Ignatius has experienced conversion in Loyola and is convinced about his discerned future of going to Jerusalem barefoot (Au 8), he has to pass through so many tests. Although the vision of Our Lady with the Holy Child Jesus confirms his decision to go to Jerusalem (Au 10), his vocational discernment is an ongoing process. He wants to keep a constant eye on the zeal and consolation of his life. During his post-conversion time of recovery in Loyola, he devotes himself to the things of God. The autobiography says:

«He persevered in his reading and his good resolutions...As he very much liked those books (*Vita Christi* and *Flos Sanctorum*), the idea came to him to note down briefly some of the more essential things from the life of Christ and the saints; so, he set himself very diligently to write a book with red ink for the words of Christ, blue ink for those of Our Lady» (Au 11).

Writing down the personal experience of God is a process of maintaining the heat of his consolations and focusing on the constant search for God's will. Olaizola says that he wants to remain in the hands of God and fulfil His will. He does not know what the will of God is. Undoubtedly, he has many steps to follow<sup>155</sup>. He has to patiently search and find the concrete way through which God wants him to serve Him.

On the way to Montserrat, he feels that he is gripped by the love of God. He experiences how God has dealt with his soul. It gives him comfort and he is filled with energy. He is determined to do the penance as other saints have done and even more (Au 14). These are external practices that maintain the rhythm of his consolations as he is on the doorstep of entering his inner life, which requires purification. After reaching Montserrat, he makes a general confession (Au 17) and wears a long garment made out of sackcloth (Au 18). He thus gets into the level of austere life, which gives great satisfaction to his soul and directs his way to a life of purification, which would take place in Manresa.

Ignatius reaches Manresa with his desire and zeal to deepen his experience of God by noting some things in his book, which gives him consolation (Au 18). In fact, noting things is a continuation of his constant tempo of consolation and enthusiasm for God. Pierre Jacob says, «On his arrival in Manresa, Ignatius is still very much in control of his feelings of enthusiasm and infatuation for God»<sup>156</sup>.

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. José M. Rodríguez Olaizola, *Ignacio de Loyola, nunca solo* (Madrid: San Pablo 2006), 41.

<sup>156</sup> Jacob, 182.

To maintain his zeal and consolation for the pilgrimage that he has planned to undertake, he begins to read *Imitación de Cristo* (imitation of Christ). *Imitación de Cristo* is a distillation of the New Testament, in which Pauline quotations are abundant. Every page that he opens gives him the spiritual food that his soul needs. While reading, the spirit of Ignatius grows<sup>157</sup>. This inspirational reading encourages him in his discernment of following Christ.

With all these external preparations, he is convinced to continue his life, always seeking God's will. Manuel Ruiz Jurado says that the moment we surrender ourselves wholeheartedly to the Lord and seek neither this nor that of our own free will, but abandon ourselves entirely to Him, we will find ourselves unified and pacified, for nothing will taste so good as the good pleasure of God's will<sup>158</sup>.

#### **2.1.6. Disordinate affections that need to be ordered**

According to Louis Maria Domínguez, disordered affection is an attachment, a strong interest and an inclination towards persons, places, life circumstances, occupations, activities and projects. The one who has disordinate affection takes a notable interest in something good or indifferent in itself, which seems to reflect the will of God and for that reason, he takes it to heart with notable personal involvement. Disordered affection is not a psychic pathology. Neither is it a great or small sin, nor is it a matter of small moral carelessness. The disordered affection is not a free decision against God. In the mind of the one who has disordinate affection, there is no intention of being unfaithful to the gospel, but on the contrary, the subject has the intention of being faithful to the gospel<sup>159</sup>. The only problem is that disordered affection seeks two contradictory things at the same time, namely, the glory of God and one's own love, desire and interest (SE 189).

Though the term disordinate affection appears mainly in the Spiritual Exercises, which will be dealt with later, the life of Ignatius is not free from this aspect. His conversion in Loyola opens his eyes a little. It is just the starting point of his vocational discernment. When a person considers the starting point of vocational discernment itself to be an end, there is a danger of bypassing the certain elements that follow, which confirm the discernment of his/her vocation. Sidelining the whole process of vocational discernment can harm a person's search for the will of God. Rightly so, Loyola does not become the end of Ignatius' vocational discernment. His

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<sup>157</sup> Cf. Manuel Ruiz Jurado, *El peregrino de la voluntad de Dios* (Madrid: BAC 2005), 33.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Luis María García Domínguez, "Discernir la afeción desordenada", *Manresa* 92 (2020): 196.

road to Montserrat and then his stay in Manresa for eleven months become decisive to his vocational discernment.

After his pleasant period of consolation up until now from Loyola, especially after he saw the vision of Lady with Child Jesus (Au 10), he is trapped in his desire for perfectionism. He wants to surpass the holiness of the saints who preceded him<sup>160</sup>. But if his vocational discernment has to reach an authentic end of finding God's will, where his eyes open completely, he has to pass through a stage of ordering his affection.

Ignatius is set to journey to Jerusalem. On his way to Montserrat on a mule, Ignatius meets a Moor, who makes a critical comment about the Virgin Mary. According to the Moor, the Virgin had indeed conceived without a man. But he does not believe that she could give birth to Jesus while remaining a virgin (Au 15). This is against the Catholic faith and is also a kind of insult. When the Moor moves ahead, Ignatius loses sight of him. At that moment, Ignatius begins to feel inner turmoil that he has not fulfilled his responsibility. The autobiography says,

«Various emotions came over him and caused discontent in his soul, as it seemed that he had not done his duty. They also aroused his indignation against the Moor, for it seemed that he had done wrong in allowing the Moor to say such things about Our Lady, and that he ought to sally forth in defense of her honor. He felt inclined to go in search of the Moor and stab him with his dagger for what he had said» (Au 15).

Though his thought to kill the Moor purely arises due to his love for Our Lady, it seems to be flavoured with the ego centred life that he had lived before his conversion. Javier Melloni analyzes whether Ignatius' thought of killing the Moor was for Mary's honour or due to his own humiliation for not having succeeded in convincing the Moor. Since his soul is still blind (Au 14), he does not recognize that the honour he felt wounded was not Mary's but his own, because he was not able to succeed in convincing the Moor<sup>161</sup>.

As soon as he realizes that his thoughts do not coincide with the conversion that he had in Loyola, he looks for solutions. With no other possible solutions, he opts to let the mule decide the course of action. He decides to drop the reins and allow the mule to go without any control up to the point the road is divided. And if the mule takes the village road, he would seek out the Moor and stab him; if the mule takes the highway, he would let him be (Au 16). But allowing the mule is a choice and a decision in itself. It is a classic path that people take to let

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<sup>160</sup> Cf. Javier Melloni, *Éxodo y Éxtasis en Ignacio de Loyola*, 2ª ed. (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2020), 40.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 34.

events decide. Let events give a sign. It's like a dice game: if it happens this way, God wants it, but if it happens the other way, God doesn't want it<sup>162</sup>.

This is a sign of a difference in Ignatius. Due to his discernment in Loyola, there is a gradual conversion from military life to the life of the saints. He is in the process of seeking God's will in everything. He does not want to take a decision amid confusion. He is not a theologian to make a decision in this case<sup>163</sup>. Leaving the mule to decide is an indication that he strongly feels the need for God to help him through other people to refine his discernment.

While analyzing the mindset of Ignatius regarding killing the moor, Ribadeneira compares it to Moses in the Old Testament. Just like Moses killed one of the Egyptians, Ignatius thinks of committing the same act<sup>164</sup>. But as opposed to Moses, Ignatius quickly realizes that it would not be the will of God to kill the moor. Nevertheless, the experience of both of them purifies their affection and shapes their future. It makes them realize that any decisions that are taken spontaneously without any space for thoughts and without seeking and finding the will of God tend to be ego centred and need proper discernment.

### **2.1.7. Narcissistic self-satisfaction that misleads vocational discernment**

There are three stages in the life of Ignatius in Manresa: a first time of narcissistic self-satisfaction; a second time of crisis, manifested in the dark night of scruples; and a third time of illumination (Au 26-30)<sup>165</sup>.

During the first stage of narcissistic self-satisfaction, Ignatius, with his tremendous zeal to do as other saints have done, considers that his own effort is the way in which he can respond to the will of God. According to Javier Melloni, his initial conversion and discernment to do what other saints have done are nothing but Euphoria<sup>166</sup>. When he reaches Manresa, he is without any knowledge of interior spiritual things (Au 20). He has not descended sufficiently to the depths of the soul, since this descent is progressive<sup>167</sup>. He begs alms every day and spends time in penance and austerity. He gets detached from his external beauty by not cutting his hair and nails (Au 19). Jose Ignacio Tellechea says that the young, rosy-faced man soon transforms into

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<sup>162</sup> Cf. Jacob, 178.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Jurado, 24.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. *FN IV*, 103.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Javier Melloni, "El conocimiento interno en la experiencia del Cardoner", *Manresa* 71 (1999): 7.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Melloni, *Éxodo y Éxtasis*, 37; *Euphoria* is intense enthusiasm or joy, with a tendency to optimism: Real Academia Española. Diccionario de la lengua española, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 2001.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Melloni, *Éxodo y Éxtasis*, 38.



a gaunt, haggard man<sup>168</sup>. These external changes of Ignatius keep his rhythm of consolation. But when a person is in deep consolation, temptations make their way. The Autobiography says:

«While in this hospice it often happened that in broad daylight, he saw something in the air near him. It gave him great consolation because it was very beautiful—remarkably so. He could not discern very well the kind of thing it was, but in a way, it seemed to him to have the form of a serpent with many things that shone like eyes, though they were not. He found great pleasure and consolation in seeing this thing, and the oftener he saw it the more his consolation grew. When it disappeared, he was displeased» (Au 19).

It's a momentary consolation that Ignatius experiences. It's a similar experience to that he had faced in Loyola during his conversion. The delight that he had experienced when he thought about the things of the world had gradually given him desolation. Similarly, this experience, though delightful in the beginning, subsequently leads him to desolation. According to the fifth rule of discernment for the second week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, this is an indication of the presence of an evil spirit. The rule says,

«We must be very attentive to the discourse of thoughts; and if the beginning, middle and end are all good, inclined to all good, it is a sign of a good angel; but if in the discourse of the thoughts that it brings, it ends in something bad or distracting, or less good than what the soul had previously proposed to do, or it weakens or disturbs or disturbs the soul, taking away its peace, tranquillity and stillness that it had before, it is a clear sign of proceeding from an evil spirit, enemy of our profit and eternal health» (SE 333).

Thus, Ignatius, who was so far floating on the experience of consolations after his conversion, is faced with desolation again. This opens a new chapter of his temptations, inner struggles, scruples and finally a transformation in Manresa.

#### **2.1.8. Scruples that hinder the progress of Ignatius during his vocational discernment**

From the time of his conversion and his decision to go to Jerusalem to the first stage of his life in Manresa, he had experienced only consolations. But during the second stage of dark nights of scruples, he hears the voice that challenges his consolation: «How will you be able to endure this life for the seventy years you have to live? » (Au 20) But the inner conviction he had after

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. Tellechea, 146.

his conversion makes him answer, «Wretch! Can you promise me an hour of life? » (Au 20) With this counter-question, he overcomes the temptations. This is the first temptation he suffers after his conversion.

There is a constant struggle between consolations and temptations. In the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, the second rule of discernment for the first week says:

«In the case of persons who are earnestly purging away their sins, and who are progressing from good to better in the service of God our Lord...it is characteristic of the evil spirit to cause gnawing anxiety, to sadden, and to set up obstacles. In this way he unsettles these persons by false reasons aimed at preventing their progress» (SE 315).

These types of experiences that Ignatius undergoes were already experienced by Anthony Abbot<sup>169</sup> in the third century. Seeing Antonio working with his own hands, begging and sleeping on the ground, the devil tempted him by reminding him of his property, affection for his relatives, love of money and glory, seducing him by taking the form of a woman, etc. But Anthony advanced in his asceticism. He began austerity and kept vigil so much that he often spent the whole night without sleeping<sup>170</sup>.

Discernment has to make a way when these situations arise. The devil attacks all those who intensely pursue a life of change from sinfulness and want to lead a life of total sacrifice for God. Therefore, identifying the devil's tactics is a necessary step when a person discerns his/her vocation.

As a result of his above-mentioned desolate experience, Ignatius feels dry and less enthusiastic. Sometimes he lacks the desire to say prayers, hear mass and perform other devotions. He had never experienced these changes before (Au 21). He is never satisfied with his repeated confessions about his past life (Au 22), to the point that he even feels like committing suicide (Au 24). This desolate experience is described in the fourth rule of discernment of the first week of the Spiritual Exercises. The rule says:

«By desolation I mean .... obtuseness of soul, turmoil within it, an impulsive motion toward low and earthly things, or disquiet from various agitations and temptations. These move one toward lack of faith

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<sup>169</sup> St. Anthony was a well-known ascetic of the 4th century, who demonstrated with his ascetic life that we can be persistent to the call of God until the end of our life with a Christ-like zeal.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Atanasio, *Vida de Antonio*, ed. Paloma Rupérez Granados (Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 1995), 37-41.

and leave one without hope and without love. One is completely listless, tepid, and unhappy, and feels separated from our Creator and Lord» (SE 317).

Such is the power of the evil spirit. It tries to kill a person's ability to discern the vocation and also directs him/her to make the wrong decision. But the fifth rule of discernment of the first week says that during a time of desolation, we should never make a change. Instead, we should remain firm and constant in the resolutions and in the decisions that we have made before the desolation (SE 318). Though Ignatius is affected by these desolations, he never gives up. The desolations shape his vocational discernment and make him realize that there is something more than the external changes that he has to focus on. He also realizes that he has a lot to purify interiorly, an important aspect of vocational discernment.

### **2.1.9. The rule of after-effect in vocational discernment**

In the midst of his temptations and scruples, St. Ignatius has two basic experiences that need more attention. His first experience is centred around confession. When he thinks of his past life, many scruples come to his mind. He keeps thinking about his sins repeatedly. This provokes him to confess again and again. Confessing the sins in itself is a good step taken by Ignatius because the confession helps a person return to God. It is a positive move. But his consecutive confessions lead to negative experiences. The Autobiography says:

«While at prayer he began to remember his sins; and so, as in a process of threading, he went on thinking of sin after sin from his past and felt he was obliged to confess them again. But after these thoughts, disgust for the life he led came over him, with impulses to give it up» (Au 25).

At this moment, he is guided by his confessor. But at the same time, being attentive to the diversity of spirits, which he had experienced since the conversion in Loyola, he asks himself what is the source of the impulse to give up what he has already felt as a will of God. According to Pierre Jacob, Ignatius uses the rule of after-effect as the solution to this problem. According to this rule, the thought that produces a negative after-effect must be discarded<sup>171</sup>. And therefore, Ignatius decides with great lucidity not to confess anything from the past any more. Consequently, he remains free of those scruples (Au 25).

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. Jacob, 186.

His second experience is centred around too many consolations. Once freed from scruples, his desire to pray increases to the point that he wants to pray even during the time allotted to sleep. The autobiography says:

«When he went to bed, great enlightenment, great spiritual consolations, often came to him; so that they made him lose much of the time he had allotted to sleep, which was not much. Examining this several times, he thought to himself that he had ample time assigned for converse with God, and all the rest of the day as well; and he began to doubt, therefore, whether that enlightenment came from a good spirit. He concluded that it would be better to ignore it and to sleep for the allotted time. And so, he did» (Au 26).

Spiritual consolations during sleep eventually cause tiredness, which affects the normal functioning of the day. If God wants to comfort a person, he would do so at the appointed time and in such a way that it does not disturb the person from the rhythm of life, which is to sleep and pray at the prescribed time. The will of God is more precious to the person than the consolation felt. The Giver of the gifts is more important than the gifts of the Giver<sup>172</sup>. Unlike the first, this experience is full of consolations and enlightenment. But like the first, this experience leads to a negative after-effect that must be avoided.

Olaizola says that these nocturnal consolations are nothing but a falsehood. This is how we discover that sometimes the evil spirit sneaks in under the cloak of good<sup>173</sup>. In vocational discernment, one must be attentive to these excessive consolations, which seem to be coming from God but actually are not. Here, the fourth rule of discernment for the second week of the Spiritual Exercises, is applicable, which says:

«It is characteristic of the evil angel, who takes on the appearance of an angel of light, to enter by going along the same way as the devout soul and then to exit by his own way with success for himself. That is, he brings good and holy thoughts attractive to such an upright soul and then strives little by little to get his own way, by enticing the soul over to his own hidden deceits and evil intentions» (SE 332).

#### **2.1.10. The role of Illumination in vocational discernment**

This third stage of illumination in the life of Ignatius is the transition from darkness to a mystical light<sup>174</sup>. During this stage, God makes his presence in his life<sup>175</sup>. When God begins to treat him as «a schoolmaster treats a child, teaching him» (Au 27), his attention gets totally

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<sup>172</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Olaizola, 71.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Gerald Coleman, *Walking with Inigo* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2002), 61.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Pedro Arrupe, "Trinitarian Inspiration of the Ignatian Charism", *Studies* 33 (2001): 5.

focused on God. His purpose of imitating the saints (Au 7) begins to disappear. At this moment, he has five mystical experiences along with the Cardoner experience, which give him internal knowledge of God and confirm his vocation.

Firstly, as he prays the Office of Our Lady, his understanding begins to rise, as if he sees the Holy Trinity in the form of three keys (Au 28). This mystical experience affects him so deeply that it produces an outburst of tears with overflowing emotions<sup>176</sup>. At this moment, his great devotion to the Most Holy Trinity becomes a dominant theme in his spiritual life, to the point that «he can never.... stop speaking except in the Most Holy Trinity; and this with many comparisons and very diverse, and with much joy and consolation» (Au 28)<sup>177</sup>. His devotion to the Most Holy Trinity (the central mystery) increases in such a way that he starts praying to the Three Persons separately every day (Au 28).

Secondly, with great spiritual joy, he comes to an understanding of how God created the world. He seems to see something white, from which some rays were coming, and he realizes that God made light from these. Thirdly, during the Mass, in the elevation of the body of the Lord, he sees with interior eyes how Jesus Christ was there in the Blessed Sacrament. Fourthly, during a vision, he sees with interior eyes the humanity of Christ as a white body (Au 29). These visions, or mystical experiences, comfort him and give him hope that God has never left him. They give clarity to his vocation and validate him for the service of Christ.

These mystical experiences of seeing with interior eyes also cause him intense joy and consolation<sup>178</sup>. They make a shift from exteriority to interiority in his life. These consolations also serve as preparation for his Cardoner experience. What is his Cardoner experience? While he is seated with his eyes facing towards the river Cardoner, the eyes of his understanding open and he begins to learn many things, such as spiritual matters and matters of faith. With this enlightenment, everything seems new to him (Au 30).

On the basis of Ignatius' Cardoner experience, Javier Melloni says that the internal knowledge that Ignatius received is not enlightened by reason itself but comes from a more fundamental, more intimate core of the human being, the fruit of a work of transparency and communion in which the "I" has been decentred<sup>179</sup>. The spiritual illuminations help him overcome his ego.

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<sup>176</sup> Cf. Paul Coutinho, *Ignatian Path Way* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011), 35.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Arrupe. "Trinitarian Inspiration", 5.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Melloni, "El conocimiento interno", 11.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 12.

God becomes the ultimate focus at the end of this stage of illumination. A sign of indifference<sup>180</sup> starts appearing in his thoughts and, consequently, in his vocational discernment.

### 2.1.11. A need for spiritual accompaniment

According to the *Diccionario de Autoridades*, accompanying signifies the group of people who are or will be accompanying another, either by courtesy and friendship or by obligation, as servants do with their masters<sup>181</sup>. This meaning is nothing close to the topic of vocational discernment with which we deal here. The *Diccionario de Lengua Española* comes closer to the topic when it defines accompaniment on the one hand as «to be or go in the company of another person or persons» and on the other hand as «to participate in someone's feelings»<sup>182</sup>. From these meanings, we can define what spiritual accompaniment is. Barry and Connolly define spiritual accompaniment as help given by one Christian to another to enable him or her to hear God's communication, to grow in familiarity with this God and to translate the consequences of this relationship into life<sup>183</sup>. According to this statement, a spiritual accompaniment takes place when someone who has the skill, aptitude and experience of accompanying helps another to be on the right track of fulfilling God's will and strengthens the faith.

Ignatius on his journey of vocational discernment, undergoes twists and turns in his experience of God, which rewinds his past life, shapes his new path and strengthens his vocation. In this process, we cannot sideline the aspect of spiritual accompaniment. José Domingo Cuesta says that the Autobiography allows us to understand not only how God directed and accompanied Ignatius in his life but also how Ignatius himself directed and accompanied many people in their encounter with God. It also shows us how he learned from others in his tireless search for God's will<sup>184</sup>. Thus, the spiritual accompaniment becomes a linear progressive movement of help from one person to another.

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<sup>180</sup> Indifference is nothing more than the expression of the will to listen, through all the motives and natural calls, to the unique will of God, a free gift, which descends from above: Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Textos de Ejercicios Espirituales* (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2009), 218.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de Autoridades*, Gredos, Madrid, 1990, I.

<sup>182</sup> Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española*, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 2001.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Piet Van Breemen, "Acompañamiento espiritual hoy", *Manresa* 68 (1996): 364.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. José Domingo Cuesta, "Acompañamiento", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 80.

God accompanies and directs Ignatius through various events, from Loyola to Manresa, where he realizes his apostolic vocation. The autobiography mentions how God treated him specifically during his dark stage of temptations and scruples in Manresa. It says,

«God treated him at this time just as a schoolmaster treats a child whom he is teaching. Whether this was because of his lack of education and of brains, or because he had no one to teach him, or because of the strong desire God himself had given him to serve him, he believed without doubt and has always believed that God treated him in this way» (Au 27).

But, along with the accompaniment that he received from God, we cannot dilute how others (confessors) played an important role in accompanying him in his crucial period of Montserrat and Manresa. As soon as he arrives at Montserrat, he makes his general confession with a French monk, Jean Chanon, his confessor<sup>185</sup>. The confessor guides him using «*Breve Compendio*»<sup>186</sup>, which contains various prayer practices<sup>187</sup>. The autobiography says, «This was the first man to whom he revealed his decision, because until then he had not revealed it to any confessor» (Au 17).

Ignatius' second experience of accompaniment takes place during the second stage of his life in Manresa. When he experiences temptations and scruples (Au 20-22), he feels the importance and need for spiritual accompaniment in order to overcome the obstacles that stop the progressive growth of his vocational journey. Seeing the repeated confession of Ignatius about his past due to his scruples, the confessor asks him to stop confessing anything about the past anymore (Au 23). He also tells Ignatius to break his past, as he saw that this kind of past would damage his health and distort the plan of God for him. Ignatius respects the words of his confessor and obeys him, which eventually helps him overcome his scruples (Au 25). Thus, the role of confessor becomes crucial in his life since it is manifested in those moments of confusion, doubts, scruples and insecurities.

What stands out here is that vocational discernment receives the help of spiritual accompaniment. It is during the struggle between consolation and desolation (Au 19, 20) that Ignatius seeks guidance. It helps him discern the evil spirit, which is active in giving him the experience of desolation during the second period of scruples. But we must realize that the

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<sup>185</sup> Cf. P. R. Divarkar, ed., *Testament and Testimony: The Memoirs of Ignatius of Loyola*, (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1994), 32.

<sup>186</sup> «*Breve Compendio*» is the summary of *Ejercitatorio* of Garcia Cisneros, a benedictine monk in Montserrat. It contains general confession as the first practice. And therefore, the general confession of Ignatius is inspired by «*Breve Compendio*».

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Carles Marcet, «Ignacio de Loyola acompañado, acompañante, en compañía», *Manresa* 90 (2018): 318.

spiritual accompaniment is only a help in discerning the vocation and it never dictates one's vocational discernment. Vocational discernment is personal, which always demands our intimacy with God, who is the sole director of our life. This can be observed during the third stage of the illuminations of Ignatius, where the divine experiences and visions deepen his intimacy with God (Au 28-30) and purify his life, which is heading towards fulfilling God's will.

### **2.1.12. The role of the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession**

In his journey to find God's will, Ignatius obeys the teachings of the Church. The sacraments of Eucharist and Confession play a vital role in Ignatius' journey of conversion and transformation and strengthen his vocational discernment.

As discussed earlier, during the transformation period (third time of illumination) in Manresa, while hearing the Mass, he clearly sees with his interior eyes Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament at the time of consecration (*Au 29*). The effect of this illumination was a powerful devotion to Eucharist<sup>188</sup>. The celebration of the Eucharist is the source and gift that he receives, not so much from what he learns after scholastic and dogmatic theology but as from the understanding and experience of a God with boundless love<sup>189</sup>.

This blazing love of Ignatius for the Eucharist during the discernment of his vocation is carried forward in his transformed life with devotion and tears. After his priestly ordination, he decides to spend a year without saying Mass, preparing himself and praying to Our Lady that she would deign to place him with her Son (*Au 96*). This postponement and this long preparation reveal the special place that the Mass occupied in his mystical life. At the end of the autobiography (*Au 100*), it is mentioned that he always had tears in prayer and at Mass. For him, the Eucharist was nothing but a profound and irreplaceable relationship with Christ. That is why, today, the Holy Eucharist is, as Pietro Schiavone says, a fundamental aspect of both Ignatian spirituality and the spirituality of the Society<sup>190</sup>.

Secondly, the sacrament of confession too shapes his vocational discernment, especially during his dark period of temptations and scruples in Manresa. Prior to his conversion itself, he had

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<sup>188</sup> Cf. Coleman, 61.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Eduard López Hortelano, "La triple visión en Ignacio: creación, Eucaristía y humanidad de Cristo (*Au 29*). Ayer como hoy", *Manresa* 94 (2022): 156.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Pietro Schiavone, "Misa", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1233-1234.



devotion and respect for confession, which resulted from the Christian faith that he had inherited from his family. He goes for confession on the day the bombardment of Pamplona is expected (*Au* 1). He also confesses in Loyola when he is in danger of death (*Au* 3). But unlike these urgent confessions, he makes a general confession in Montserrat (*Au* 17)<sup>191</sup>. He does it with careful attention to his past sinful life. In spite of it, as mentioned earlier, he feels that he has not confessed well during general confession. With distress and dissatisfaction, he wants to confess again and again (*Au* 22,25).

The vocational discernment of Ignatius was such that he wanted to walk in the consolation of God, leaving behind every past sin until he was satisfied, so that he was free to focus only on God's will and not on himself. Thus, around the sacraments of the Eucharist and confession, the central pillars of Christianity, he weaves his vocation.

### **2.1.13. Jerusalem: A bend of the road or the end of the road?**

With his profound spiritual experience of transformation in Manresa, Ignatius journeys through Barcelona to Jerusalem. The journey to Jerusalem was not a sudden decision after his Manresa experience. His dream of going to Jerusalem was already there during his vocational discernment in Loyola while he was recuperating after his fall in the battle of Pamplona. All that he had wished to do, after he was healed, was to go to Jerusalem as a pilgrim (*Au* 9). But it was nothing but a plan of pilgrimage. He never had any intention to stay there. Juan M. Martín-Moreno describes that Ignatius wondered what he would do 'after he came from Jerusalem' and considered the possibility of going to the Carthusian monastery in Seville 'without saying who he was so that they would have him as a lesser person' (*Au* 12)<sup>192</sup>. But while he has reached Jerusalem, the autobiography reveals that his firm intention is to remain in Jerusalem, continually visiting those holy places; and in addition to this devotion, his plan is also to help souls (*Au* 45). Juan M. Martín-Moreno says that this change of plan might have been, as some think, after the consolations Ignatius received during his stay in the Holy Land. It is much more likely, as M. Gilbert (1991) thinks, that Ignatius already intended to stay in

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<sup>191</sup> This confession is inspired by the book *Exercitatorio de vida espiritual* of García Jiménez de Cisneros: Javier Melloni, "Montserrat", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1286.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Juan M. Martín-Moreno, "Jerusalén", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1065.

Jerusalem when he left Barcelona<sup>193</sup>. But we cannot rule out the role of a transformative spiritual experience in Manresa for his decision to stay in Jerusalem and help souls.

When the Franciscan provincial of the Holy Land forbids his further stay in Jerusalem by explaining to him the decision of the Church, he understands that it was not the will of our Lord that he should remain in those holy places (*Au* 47). The authoritative communication of the Church was the will of God for him and he undoubtedly obeys the Church. He has the clarity that God does not want him to be in Jerusalem. But where does God want him to be? What is the will of God for him? So far, he has not chosen a state of life as a follower of God. His destiny is not Jerusalem. It is just a bend of the road in his journey of vocational discernment and therefore he is on the move. Things are not clear as to what exactly God wants from him. But after the Manresa experience, he has the patience to discover God's will. Vocational discernment is a slow process of finding God's will through constant discovery. He continues to grow in this aspect of life.

#### **2.1.14. The rule of after-effect again!**

After returning to Barcelona, Ignatius thinks about the need for studies to help souls. During his studies in Barcelona, his prayer life also goes hand in hand. Prayer has been a part of his life, wherever he is and whatever he does. But the same difficulty he had in Manresa returns during his prayer. The autobiography says,

«When he began to memorize, as one must in the beginnings of grammar, there came to him new insights into spiritual matters and fresh relish, to such an extent that he could not memorize, nor could he drive them away no matter how much he resisted. So, thinking often about this, he said to himself, “Not even when I engage in prayer and am at Mass do such vivid insights come to me”. Thus, little by little, he came to realize that it was a temptation» (*Au* 54-55).

These are false consolations that Ignatius experiences during his studies, and he considers them distractions. Since they are consoling, he lets himself be carried away at first until he realizes that they can be of no use to him. They increase his devotion and piety, but in the end, the consequence is that he neither learns nor studies nor advances. And thus, he realizes that they are not from God. In the things of God, both the beginning and the end are good. But in the

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<sup>193</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 1065.

things that are not of God, the beginning may be very good, but one may end up where one did not want to be<sup>194</sup>.

In this case, spiritual experiences translate into tiredness or poor performance in studies. Ignatius, as in Manresa, again applies the rule of the after-effect. A consolation with a negative after-effect cannot come from God, so resist it<sup>195</sup>.

### **2.1.15. A constant discernment amidst the interrogation**

After having the inclination to study in order to help souls, Ignatius begins his new journey that passes through Barcelona, Alcalá and Salamanca. Though he does not have authorization to teach or guide people through Spiritual Exercises, with his tremendous zeal, he starts guiding people.

Though there were no errors in his teaching (Au 58), his lack of education was surely a barrier to speak about matters of faith (Au 62). Helping the souls was not possible because he had not studied (Au 63). In Alcalá, he is accused of being an alumbrado<sup>196</sup> (Au 58). In Salamanca, he is interrogated, investigated in theology and imprisoned for 22 days, even though no error is found in his life or his teaching (Au 70). His lack of studies becomes a hindrance to his desire to help souls. With his determination and conviction to help souls, he commends before God what He wants him to do and then decides to go to Paris (Au 71). Meanwhile, he is also discerning his vocation to a state of life. He has not yet decided to be a priest. He has kept alive those thoughts of becoming religious, where he will have more suffering. But he is confident that God will help him in this regard (Au 71). He is indifferent to this. He is ready to follow what God wants from him. He is on his way to seek and find the will of God in his life, which is central to vocational discernment.

Even as he is in the process of his studies in Paris, his desire to help souls never stops. And therefore, the problems continue when the inquisitor questions him. But he is prepared for any investigation (Au 81), for he believes that there is nothing against the teaching of the Church. Throughout this process, Ignatius accepts the questioning process and obeys the order, but he

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<sup>194</sup> Cf. Olaizola, 117.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Pierre Jacob, 188.

<sup>196</sup> Alumbrado (a Spanish word) is a follower of a doctrine that emerged in the 16th century in Spain. According to that doctrine, a person could reach such a perfect state through prayer that, being surrendered to God, he did not need to practice the sacraments or good works and whatever might have been his acts, if he surrendered to God, he was free of sins: Real Academia Española. Diccionario de la lengua española, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 2001.

never gives up his desire to help the souls. Thus, throughout these experiences of interrogation and investigation, Ignatius never takes a step to go against the Church and its teachings, but to do what the Church demands of him.

#### **2.1.16. Vocation as Convocation: The discernment of Ignatius with his companions to a state of life**

When Ignatius arrives in Paris, he comes across some companions who were there to study arts and some theology. After listening to him and seeing his way of helping souls, they too decide to lead the way of life of Ignatius. They decide that once they have finished their studies, they will go to Jerusalem and spend their lives for the good of the souls (Au 85). But the autobiography does not give any clarity about why and how Ignatius decides to be a priest along with his companions. There is no explanation for how he discerns to be a priest. But the process of vocational discernment that he underwent so far in his life does not rule out his discernment along with his companions to a state of life, which is to be a priest. According to Luis de Diego, Ignatius' initial intuition, long before he was ordained, was always to help the souls. But he was not a clergyman and therefore could not receive a canonical mission. Then he, along with his companions, thinks that an apostolic priesthood could be recognized by the Church as a ministry. It must therefore remain the primary specification of their decision in favour of ordination<sup>197</sup>. This was their collective decision as friends in the Lord. Thus, their individual vocation becomes a convocation as it is discerned together.

Then, even as priests, their goal to help souls in Jerusalem never ceases. They undergo various deliberations, during which they discern together how and when to proceed to Jerusalem. But this plan never comes true, as God has other plans for them.

#### **2.1.17. The discovery of the will of God and the obedience to the Church**

After he receives the vows with his companions in 1534 at Montmartre, he, along with them, decides that, if they are not given permission to remain in Jerusalem, they will return to Rome and submit to the Vicar of Christ (Au 85). But the plan of God is different from what they had thought, since they do not even reach Jerusalem. The war between Turkey and Venice hinders their travel to Jerusalem due to the cancellation of pilgrimage ship to Jerusalem. Ribadeneira

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<sup>197</sup> Cf. Luis de Diego, "Sacerdocio", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1582.

mentions that it is worth noting that many years before and after here, until the year 1570, the pilgrimage ship never stopped leaving for Jerusalem, except that year. He also says that it was divine providence, which was directing the steps of these pilgrims to serve Him (God) in things higher than what they understood and thought<sup>198</sup>. The vision at La Storta, however, confirms their mission to go to Rome and submit to the Pope in obedience.

During this vision of La Storta, Ignatius hears the words of God the Father telling Jesus to take Ignatius as a servant. Then he hears the voice of the Father: «*Ego ero vobis Romae propitius*»<sup>199</sup>. This Latin phrase means that God will be favourable to Ignatius and his companions in Rome. He begins to understand that Rome is his new Jerusalem. According to Pierre Jacob, this experience of consolation that confirms the will of God in his life is consolation without previous cause<sup>200</sup>. What is consolation without previous cause? According to the second rule of discernment for the second week of the Spiritual Exercises,

«Only God our Lord can give the soul consolation without a preceding cause. For it is the prerogative of the Creator alone to enter the soul, depart from it, and cause a motion in it which draws the whole person into love of His Divine Majesty. By “without a preceding cause” I mean without any previous perception or understanding of some object by means of which the consolation just mentioned might have been stimulated, through the intermediate activity of the person’s acts of understanding and willing» (SE 330).

This experience gives him the confidence to know the plans of God in his life. He, along with his companions, journeys to Rome to be at the disposal of Pope. His attitude of being totally at the disposal of the Pope flows from that same unreserved attitude towards Christ<sup>201</sup>. For him, obedience to Pope and the Church is obedience to the will of God. Ignatius says in his letter to Claudius, Emperor of Abyssinia, that it is necessary that all the faithful believe and obey the Church in what she commands<sup>202</sup>. Christ and the Church cannot be separated in the Christian life. Jesus Christ himself says to his disciples, «He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me» (Lk 10,16). Nadal, while recalling the life of Ignatius, says that even the most exalted mystical graces of Ignatius were always in harmony with Sacred Scripture, the virtues, right reason and edification- in

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<sup>198</sup> FN IV, 257.

<sup>199</sup> Ruiz Jurado, 130.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Pierre Jacob, 237.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Harvey Eagan, *Ignatius the Mystic* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 173.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Candido de Dalmases, ed., *Obras Completas de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Madrid: BAC, 1963), 907.

short, with the Church<sup>203</sup>. Thus, as we have seen during the conversion of St Paul in the first chapter and now in the life of St Ignatius, there is no vocational discernment if it goes against the teachings of the Church, which is founded by Christ himself.

### **2.1.18. Gathering the fruit of vocational discernment**

St. Ignatius' journey took definite shape when he arrived in Rome. What a journey! On this journey, Ignatius never had any idea what his next step was. Such was his trust in God, whom he interiorized as his vacation got strengthened by every moment of discernment.

On his journey, there was constant discovery. It was not only a discovery of finding God's will in the small moments of life, but also of seeking and finding the state of life and the final destination to serve the Lord. But in this process, every step and every moment became a vocational discernment. The people who became part of his life were a valuable support for his vocational discernment. The ambience of Loyola, Manresa, Jerusalem, Paris, etc. shaped his journey towards the discovery of his vocation.

At the same time, his vocational discernment became the foundation for building a close relationship with Christ, and, in turn, his inner closeness to Christ helped him to discern better. He found God's hand in every step of his life. His relationship with God became stronger and stronger. He accepted all the difficulties and struggles of life.

Finally, when God led him to Rome, he found peace and tranquillity. He could easily concentrate on the love of Christ. The strong relationship with God that he felt during prayer made him deepen his discernment. Thus, this relationship shaped his vocational discernment.

Ultimately, his whole life became an inner joy. All the pains, the desolations, the twists and turns of life and the temptations that he went through, ultimately directed him to what God wanted from him. It was God's will. Therefore, his vocational discernment became the true consolation of his life.

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<sup>203</sup> Cf. Eagan, 171.

## 2.2. Vocational discernment in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola

Can SE be the source how to choose a state of life? In other words, can we find answers in the SE for vocational discernment? When we know the answer to why we do the SE, we might head closer to the answer. Polanco says that the SE are done to cleanse the soul from sins and vices and the remains of the heart, and to arrange and strengthen it for purity in the future. Then he goes on to say that the SE are to enlighten the soul to know the goodness, wisdom, mercy and justice of Christ, the supreme Mediator and to choose the state of life and the way that leads to the ultimate end of our happiness and the glory of God<sup>204</sup>. From the perspective of vocational discernment, the final statement of Polanco gives us confidence to enter the world of the SE with the intention of looking for the ways through which we can search and find the will of God and the state of life to which God calls us.

To know concretely whether vocational discernment is possible in the SE, we need to delve into the definition of the SE. The first annotation gives clarity on this point. It says,

«By the term Spiritual Exercises, we mean every method of examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation, vocal or mental prayer, and other spiritual activities, ...given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul (SE 1) ».

As mentioned above, getting rid of disordered affections is necessary in order to seek and find God's will, or, to put it another way, to elect a state of life to which God calls a person. This process can take place through various meditations and contemplations dealt with in the SE. As a result, SE become a method of vocational discernment.

In the SE, the whole process of vocational discernment to elect a state of life converges in the election. In other words, election is not an exercise independent of the others in the SE. Those who do SE with a view of making an election of a state of life consider every step and process of the SE as marching towards election and every exercise prior to that as preparation for election. Luis M. Garcia Domínguez says that before entering into elections, the retreatant must make a certain spiritual journey, according to the logic of the Ignatian text, which is a condition of possibility in order to arrive prepared for a good election<sup>205</sup>. Based on this stand, SE can be considered a process of vocational discernment that leads a person to make a discerned election.

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<sup>204</sup> Cf. *Monumenta Ignaciana II: Exercitia Spirituality Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Et Eorum Directoria II*, Roma, 1555 (MHSJ 76), 277.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Luis María García Domínguez, *La Entrevista en los Ejercicios Espirituales* (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2010), 193-194.

Though the election takes place at the end of the second week, the rest of the two weeks that follow do not divert attention from vocational discernment. Instead, they are intrinsic to the process and they help to confirm the vocation.

In this part of the chapter, let's briefly observe how the Principle and Foundation and the rest of the first week of the SE are a help towards vocational discernment. Then let us deal with some exercises from the second week, which directly act as preparation for the election of a state of life. And finally, let us briefly discuss the role of the last two weeks in vocational discernment.

## **2.2.1. The First Week of the Spiritual Exercises**

### **2.2.1.1. Principle and Foundation (SE 23)**

«Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created. From this it follows that we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it. To attain this, it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden. Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters. Rather, we ought to desire and choose only that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created» (SE 23).

PF is the starting point to enter the SE. It creates the attitude and inner dispositions required to do the SE<sup>206</sup>. First of all, man accepts his creaturely condition, which further makes him realize that he is absolutely dependent on God. This also indicates that the meaning of his existence comes from the same Creator and Lord, who is his source. This is the unconditional love of God towards him. The Spiritual Exercises begin well, when we place our true self from the beginning before the great God who is waiting for us<sup>207</sup>.

According to Santiago Arzubialde, there are four aspects in PF. The first one deals with why human beings and the other things are created. A human being is created to praise, reverence and serve God and through this, to save his/her soul. Other things are created to help him/her in the pursuit for which he/she is created. The second one is that he/she has to use other things for the end he/she is created. The third one deals with the indifference of human beings to all

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<sup>206</sup> Cf. Elías Royón, "Principio y Fundamento", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1491.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Antonio Guillén, "Directorio breve sobre el Principio y Fundamento", *Manresa* 87 (2015):70.



created things. The fourth one deals with *magis*. A human being has to desire and choose that which leads him/her most to the purpose for which he/she is created<sup>208</sup>.

These are closely related to vocational discernment. The vocation of a human being is to do God's will in the best way possible, with the help of other creations. It is carried out with indifference and without any disordered attachment to things.

For all that God is, it makes a human being live his/her entire life with openness to the mystery of God rather than living a self-oriented life<sup>209</sup>. In this relationship, as a created being, a person wants to praise, reverence and serve the creator unconditionally. This is the purpose of the creation. It is a call to human beings (the creation) to respond unconditionally to the creator. This clarifies that «creacion de Dios es vocacional» (creation of God is vocational)<sup>210</sup>. Everyone, as a creation, wants to respond to God's call.

There are other things that are created and they are means to achieve the above-mentioned end. Other things are at the disposition of human beings. While fulfilling the purpose (vocation) of his creation, he is called to use other things with indifference. According to Elias Royón, the definition of Ignatius on indifference is placing oneself entirely at the hands of God, which creates harmony between the means and the end<sup>211</sup>. According to Gabino Uríbarri, indifference is concentration on our ultimate purpose, which orders everything else in such a way that everything is relativized, not despised, insofar as creatures are not the ultimate goods, but the penultimate ones<sup>212</sup>. Indifference leads to discernment and consequently to election, which is the main objective of the experience of the Exercises<sup>213</sup>.

What is the role of PF in vocational discernment? PF is a preparation, or rather a disposition, to enter the SE. The one who discerns his/her vocation enters the SE with total freedom of detachment. He/she is open and indifferent to any state of life in which God wants him/her to serve Him. Ultimately, through service, praise and reverence to God, the discerning person wants to save his/her soul. Saving the soul requires detachment from things in the world and attachment to the will of God. Ignatius asked St Francis Xavier, referring to the words of the

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<sup>208</sup> Cf. S. Arzubialde, *Ejercicios Espirituales De S. Ignacio: Historia y Análisis* (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 1991), 114.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Albino García Estébanez, "Ejercicios espirituales: Método", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 690.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Royón, "Principio y Fundamento", 1491.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 1492.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Gabino Uríbarri, "Líneas maestras de la Cristología Ignaciana", in *Dogmática Ignaciana*, ed. Gabino Uríbarri (Mensajero- Maliaño- Madrid: Bilbao-Sal Terrae- UPCo, 2018), 152.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Royón, "Principio y Fundamento", 1494.

Bible, «For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? » (Mk 6,36). It was a call for him to discern what God wants from him rather than what the world calls him to do and thus to save his soul.

In vocational discernment, PF is a tool to put God at the centre of life. Discovering the will of God in order to know how He wants us to praise, reverence and serve him is a disposition that is required of us. Secondly, while discerning the call of God, we need inner freedom to respond with indifference to what God wants from us. We, as creatures of God, cannot be attached to the things of this world. Attachment to things diverts the purpose of our vocation and ultimately, it will mislead us to fulfil our own desires rather than doing God's will. A call not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor and a long life rather than a short one can be understood meaningfully in spite of the misleading act of the enemy. This will be clarified later in the meditation of two standards.

Is the disposition in the PF itself a vocational discernment? Those who enter the SE with the intention of vocational discernment are, at the moment, only indifferent to any state of life. After going through a series of exercises that make them attached to God and indifferent internally, they make an election at the end of the second week of the Spiritual Exercises. Thus, PF is not itself a vocational discernment, but rather it is related to election. Hugo Rahner says,

«The text of the foundation (23) can only be understood from the text of the election (169, 179). And what is said there about the salvation of the soul and indifference towards all created things sums up the attitude necessary for any election regarding one's state of Life...(PF) is almost repeated word by word at the Election (SE 169-179) »<sup>214</sup>.

But there is no doubt that evangelical perfection is expected at this stage of PF, since all Christians are obliged to have evangelical perfection in life. In any state of Christian life, either in the world, in a religious life, or in any profession, evangelical perfection is common and necessary for those who enter into the Spiritual Exercises<sup>215</sup>.

Based on the above study on PF, we can affirm, as Josefina Errázuriz says, that PF is an entrance portico and cornerstone of the SE<sup>216</sup>, especially from the point of view of vocational

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<sup>214</sup> Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian* (London: Cassell Publishers Ltd, 1968), 62; Election is a decisive exercise with regard to vocational discernment. It will be dealt with later in this chapter.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. José García de Castro, ed., *Comentario a los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio* (Bilbao-Santander-Madrid: Mensajero-Sal Terrae-UPCo, 2018), 96.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Josefina Errázuriz, “¿Qué hace María en los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio? Su presencia y sentido de esa presencia”, *Manresa* 66 (1994): 369.

discernment. The attitudes of creatureliness and indifference that are discussed here will appear profoundly in the following exercises as essential elements of vocational discernment.

### **2.2.1.2. The exercises on the meditation of sins**

After the PF, in which we have found the elements of vocational discernment, the rest of the first week deals with the aspects of sin and God's forgiveness. Just like Ignatius went through the period of awareness of his past sinfulness and the realization of God's mercy in Montserrat and Manresa, an exercitant, during the first week, focuses on one's own sins and becomes aware of the greatness of God, which helps in his/her vocational discernment.

According to Simon Decloux, being in the first week is being in the heart of the conversion, which is the hallmark of the first week of the Spiritual Exercises<sup>217</sup>. In the course of this conversion, there is a decision-making process. Luis M. Garcia Domínguez says that acts of decision are to resist a thought, not to swear in vain, not to speak an idle or unprofitable word, not to reproach or murmur, not to act against the commandments of God or of the Church and at the same time they are also decisions to carry out their contrary and thus to fall into sin<sup>218</sup>. Thus, the practice of making decisions during the first week gradually orients towards acting according to the will of God and more particularly, later at the end of the second week, helps in making election through the process of vocational discernment.

Prior to the focus on one's own sins, the first exercise deals with the sins of angels, Adam and Eve and anyone who has gone to hell (SE 45-54). This shows that sin exists in the world since the very beginning. This also means that a human being is fallible and if growing pride accompanies his/her life, the most precluded intelligence and freedom, like those of the angels, can be misused (SE 50)<sup>219</sup>. Accepting the fact that the sin exists, the retreatant realizes in the second exercise (SE 55-61) that his/her personal sin has separated him/her from God and with great humility, he/she asks for grace of intense sorrow and tears for his/her sins (SE 55) and proposes before God amendments for the future (SE 61). Luis M. Garcia Domínguez reminds us again that the amendment that is proposed with God's grace is the consequent decision for his greater awareness of separation from God<sup>220</sup>.

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<sup>217</sup> Cf. S. Decloux, *Our Lady in Ignatian Spirituality* (Roma: *Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis*, 1988), 115.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Domínguez, *La Entrevista en los Ejercicios Espirituales*, 194.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 194.

The third exercise is a repetition of the first two exercises. It focuses on the feelings of consolation and desolation of the first two exercises. This shows that confessing sins is not itself a solution for sinfulness. But rather, it examines the inner world of feelings and discovers how sinfulness leads to desolations through turmoil and lack of faith (SE 317) and consolations through tears and inspiration (SE 315) after the confession.

This marks the entry of discernment into the first week. On the one hand, there is a feeling of shame and desolation for my sins (SE 74) and on the other hand, there is consolation because of Christ, who has died for me (SE 53) and because of God's pity and mercy despite my sinfulness (SE 71). These feelings make the exercitant humble before God. Luis M. Garcia Domínguez says that in the act of repentance, the attitude of the exercitant will be closer to the humility of discipleship than to the pride of sin<sup>221</sup>. This humility creates a desire in the exercitant to imitate and follow Christ and ask oneself, what have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ? (SE 53).

These questions later become the basis of vocational discernment during the second week and lead to elect a state of life. Thus, the first week plays an important role in one's disposition for the election. «It reconciles the subject with himself, giving him a more realistic and humble vision of himself, showing him the bad result of his self-sufficiency; because it clarifies and minimizes the egocentric and centripetal motivations; and because it awakens a new motivation based on the personal love of gratitude to Christ, felt in consolation»<sup>222</sup>.

With the hatred for his/her sins, which he/she realizes are obstacles to the attainment of his/her ultimate end, and whose monstrosity he/she has recognized and mourned, he/she comes out more resolved to serve God<sup>223</sup>. And therefore, at the end of the first week, after experiencing the forgiveness of God, the exercitant is free to open himself to the mysteries of Christ in the second week with great passion. During the second week, there is a process of abasement, which will lead to the third way of being humble and to identification with Christ. This is fundamental to the vocation. Pride leads to self-centredness, which in turn leads to hell. But Christ (crucified) rescues us from this (SE 53).

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<sup>221</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 194-195.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Ramon Crexáns, "Del segundo preámbulo de la meditación del reino de Cristo", *Manresa* 43 (1935): 229.

### **2.2.2. The Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises**

After having meditated on sin and God's love in the First Week, the retreatant is led into a series of meditations of the Second Week, which prepare him/her to make an election<sup>224</sup>. At this moment of transition, his/her attitude is one of gratitude for the love that God has shown through forgiveness. This position makes him/her to enter the week with the question, what must I do for Christ? For this, he is ready to enter into the mysteries of Christ with a grace: «to ask for an interior knowledge of Our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely» (SE 104)<sup>225</sup>. This is the attitude of a person who approaches the SE for vocational discernment. Christ is the centre of this week, who helps him/her to discern and strengthen the vocation.

By contemplating the mysteries of Christ, we will know, love and follow Jesus fully. Therefore, the mysteries of incarnation, birth, the call of disciples, public ministry, etc. help the exercitant respond to the call of God. But in this section, I would like to concentrate on the election, which is directly related to vocational discernment. I would like to focus only on those closely related exercises that are preludes to the election. They are: The Contemplation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Two Standards, Three Classes of Person and Three Degrees of Humility<sup>226</sup>.

#### **2.2.2.1. The Contemplation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (SE 91-100)**

This exercise focuses on the call of the eternal King, Jesus Christ. Generally, a king is considered a person who has secured his life and lives without experiencing any sorrow, anxieties or tears. Particularly when it comes to Jesus as the King, at the outset, we are most likely to think that in His kingdom, we would live in a state of complete contentment. There are no battles or conflicts in God's kingdom. People act in a caring and cordial manner. There is a moral and just life. We may also go a little further to think that there is a prospect of freedom from all suffering and labour in in his kingdom. We all aspire to enter and remain in the ideal state of his kingdom forever.

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<sup>224</sup> Cf. Lisa A. Fullam, "Humildad", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 957.

<sup>225</sup> This is the same preparatory prayer said throughout the second week of SE (SE 105).

<sup>226</sup> The latter three exercises are directly linked to the election. But the kingdom exercise has a weaker reference to justify it. But Arzubialde says that the participation in the pain and glory of Jesus Christ that is expected from those who follow Him is more concretized in the poverty and the injuries that man must suffer (SE 98), which will be explained more fully in the two standards and the three degrees of humility: Arzubialde, 288.

But this exercise presents something deeper. It invites each one to make a commitment to be with Jesus and to labour in his kingdom. It presents the words of Jesus as: «Whoever wishes to come with me must labor with me, so that through following me in the pain he or she may follow me also in the glory» (SE 95).

This exercise emerges during the convalescence of St Ignatius in Loyola<sup>227</sup>. In those moments of boredom, the books about the life of Christ and the lives of saints take him to the next level of thinking. Realizing what St Francis and Dominic did for Christ, it is his turn to ask himself, «What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do to for Christ? » (SE 43). These questions become a portico for his vocational discernment. It is in this context that this exercise emerges. Hence, this exercise becomes a kind of prelude for vocational discernment. From the point of view of vocational discernment, this exercise makes explicit the vocation of man, which we have focused on in the PF<sup>228</sup>.

There are two parts to this exercise<sup>229</sup>. A description of a human king chosen by God, adored and obeyed by all other chiefs and men, is presented in the first section. This king calls people to accompany him in his endeavour to vanquish his adversaries. We reflect here on the goodness of those who answered this summons with promptitude and the depravity of those who did not.

In the second section, we relate Christ, our Lord, to the example of the human king. Our everlasting King, the Risen Christ, stands before us and calls each and every one of us. In order for us to share in his victory, Christ longs for us to follow him and collaborate with him<sup>230</sup>.

The example of the human king, which is sometimes called a parable, is a help to consider the call of Christ<sup>231</sup>. It can also be understood that the former is a preparation to respond to the call of Christ with discernment. Ignatius would say that whoever is not capable of responding to

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<sup>227</sup> Cf. Arzubialde, 280.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>229</sup> Rather than referring to this chapter as a "consideration" or "meditation," Ignatius refers it as an exercise: David L. Fleming, "Reino", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1562. But it is noteworthy that the Latin term *Contemplatio* is used in the *Vulgate* title of this exercise: *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Exercitia Spirituality*, Josephus Calveras and Candidus de Dalmases, (eds.), Roma 1969 (MHSI 100), 216. Based on this, I have titled it: The contemplation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Fleming, "Reino", 1562. Though sometimes it is called a parable, Miguel Ángel Fiorito disagrees with it. He considers the call of the human king only as an example for the call of the eternal king, Jesus Christ, since the former has correspondence with the latter: Miguel Ángel Fiorito, *Buscar y hallar la voluntad de Dios* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2013), 388.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Fleming, "Reino", 1562.

the call of a great human king who has a great plan is even less able to respond to Jesus Christ, the eternal King<sup>232</sup>.

This exercise cannot be restricted to looking into the similarity between the human and the eternal king. We must see their differences<sup>233</sup>. Otherwise, we might run the risk of reducing the importance of the eternal King, to whose call we must ultimately respond.

If the human king is chosen by God, the eternal King is God himself, who incarnates and calls us to follow him. The call of the incarnated King unfolds the agonal character of Christology. His call is to follow Him in pain. The response to the call of Jesus involves suffering and the sacrifice of life. St Ignatius had a temptation in Manresa in similar lines, which we have discussed in the first part of this chapter. It is appropriate to mention it again. The autobiography of Ignatius says:

«A forceful thought came to trouble him by pointing out the hardships of his life, like a voice within his soul. “How will you be able to endure this life for the seventy years you have to live? Sensing that it was from the enemy, he answered interiorly with great vehemence, “Wretch! Can you promise me an hour of life?” So, he overcame the temptation and remained at peace» (Au 20).

Just like Ignatius did, this exercise is an invitation to follow Christ in pain.

The grace of this exercise is to listen to the call of God. Responding to the call of God requires attentive listening. Prior to verifying and getting help from Eli, Samuel’s attentiveness made him listen to the call of God (cf. 1 Sam 3,1-14). Unlike the chaotic situation that he faced in Egypt, Moses heard the call of God in the silence of his heart in Sinai, the Holy Mountain (cf. Ex 3,1-4). Elijah heard the voice of God at Horeb during the sound of sheer silence (cf. 1 Kgs 19,12-13). St Ignatius’ conversion took place in the midst of solitude and silence. Listening to the call of God requires personal attentiveness. It takes place in the silence of the heart. Since God calls each one personally, in a serene context, it becomes a prerequisite to vocational discernment.

This exercise also presents the deeper and sacrificial availability of those who are willing to labour with Christ. It says,

«Those who desire to show greater devotion and to distinguish themselves in total service to their eternal King and universal Lord, will not only offer their persons for the labor, but go further still. They will work against their human sensitivities and against their carnal and worldly love» (SE 97).

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<sup>232</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 388.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 388.

It is a determination to resist against the temptations that can divert those who are willing to surrender themselves for the service of the eternal King. A disordered fondness for riches and honours, which are more suitable to serve as nets for the enemy, to hunt even those who are most determined to serve God, is the most deceitful way that the world and sensuality could enter our hearts and undermine the most absolute reign of the divine will<sup>234</sup>. We are called to be alert against this enemy of human nature, as the twelfth rule of discernment for the first week of the SE says,

«Enemy characteristically weakens, loses courage, and flees with his temptations when the person engaged in spiritual endeavors stands bold and unyielding against the enemy's temptations and goes diametrically against them. But if, in contrast, that person begins to fear and lose courage in the face of the temptations, there is no beast on the face of the earth as fierce as the enemy of human nature when he is pursuing his damnable intention with his surging malice» (SE 325).

We realize through this exercise that the call of the eternal King takes place in a climate of freedom. Christ never imposes his invitation to follow him, nor does he threaten the retreatant if he does not follow him. He does not impose his kingly status<sup>235</sup>. He says that those who wish to be with him must labour with him (SE 97). But the invitee is so impressed by the life of Christ that he/she wishes to respond to the call of Christ with total freedom. This prompts him/her to make an oblation at the end of the exercise (SE 98).

From the above study, we realize that this exercise is a call to fulfil God's will in whichever state of life God calls us and not a summons to a particular state of life. It equips us to determine whether we have the vocation mentioned above or not. And, if we feel that we are called, we are invited to voluntarily accept it with resolution<sup>236</sup>. Further discernment in the following exercises will give clarity to make a discerned election at the end of the second week.

#### **2.2.2.2. A Meditation on Two Standards (SE 136-148)**

Meditation on Two Standards, The Three Classes of Persons and The Three Degrees of Humility are considered preparation for election<sup>237</sup>. Let us now discuss the Meditation on Two Standards.

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<sup>234</sup> Cf. Ramon Crexans, "Del segundo preámbulo de la meditación del Reino de Cristo", *Manresa* 11 (1935): 228.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. L. M. Armendáriz, "Juntamente contemplando su vida...", *Manresa* 63 (1991): 134.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Crexans, "Del segundo preámbulo", 230.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Roberto Triviño Ayala, "Disposiciones fundamentales para la elección. Banderas, Binarios, Maneras de humildad y Elección", *Apuntes Ignacianos* 59 (2010): 65.



It is assumed that the one who approaches this text has already made an oblation to the eternal King, Jesus Christ, with the acceptance to bear all injuries, affronts, and poverty actual and spiritual (SE 98). Since the decision to follow Christ has already been made, the person is well prepared to enter into this meditation<sup>238</sup>. Once there is a great conviction to follow Christ, what is required is to distinguish and brush aside those aspects that are contrary to Christ, which can often deceive us.

### **The preamble**

Prior to this meditation of two standards, there is a preamble that communicates how this meditation helps in vocational discernment. It says,

«We shall in our next exercise (two standards) observe the intention of Christ our Lord and, in contrast, that of the enemy of human nature. We shall also think about how we ought to dispose ourselves in order to come to perfection in whatsoever state or way of life God our Lord may grant us to elect» (SE 135).

A person who discerns his/her vocation needs an attitude of indifference to any vocation of God and a proper disposition to be perfect in what he/she chooses. God is the author of our life. He initiates the call and expects from us a prompt and perfect response. This disposition helps us to benefit from this exercise and be open to God's call.

### **The objective of the meditation**

The aim of the meditation is clarified by Ignacio Iparraguirre in the *Obras Completas de San Ignacio de Loyola*. He says, «Meditación encaminada a la completa ordenación del entendimiento, es decir, a impedir que el alma se engañe en la orientación de la vida. Precisa el criterio exacto que debe regular la verdadera elección»<sup>239</sup>. In the process of making an election (choosing a state of life through discernment), the mind has to be ordered so that the decision is not misled by the tactics of the evil spirit. Hence, this meditation is a way to unmask the tactics of the evil spirit.

Similarly, according to Santiago Arzubialde, the objective of this meditation is that the exercitant may recognize the deceits of the evil leader (and help to guard against them) and the true life shown by the supreme and true captain and ask for a grace to imitate Him<sup>240</sup>. The objective is directly related to vocational discernment. The deceptive evil spirit has its way to

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<sup>238</sup> Cf. Pascual Cebollada, "Dos Banderas", *Manresa* 90 (2018): 183.

<sup>239</sup> It signifies that the meditation is aimed at the complete ordering of the mind, i.e., to prevent the soul from being misled in its orientation in life and from being deceived in the direction of life. It specifies the exact criterion that must regulate the true choice: Dalmases, ed., *Obras*, 225.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Arzubialde, 385.

deviate from those who want to respond to Christ in his mission. Those who feel consolation in following and serving Jesus are blocked by the desolations of the evil spirit. Discernment consists in distinguishing between those feelings that come from God and those that come from evil.

### **The contrasting imaginations**

According to Ignacio Errandonea, the tactics of the enemy of human nature are only an aid to contemplate the plan of the true captain<sup>241</sup>. He says that Christ must be considered, but Lucifer must only be imagined. When Jesus is imagined as seated in the humble seat, Lucifer must be imagined as seated on the great chair of fire and smoke. The latter must also be imagined as a horrible and frightening figure<sup>242</sup>. These are contrasting imaginations. Contrasting imaginations help in vocational discernment to distinguish the feelings and their sources (good spirit or evil spirit).

These contrasting imaginations bring to mind the experience of Ignatius of Loyola during his recuperation, as mentioned in the first part of this chapter. The feelings of consolation and desolation that Ignatius discovered during his conversion in Loyola had thoughts and imaginations as their precursors. The contrasting thoughts opened his contrasting imaginations. The succession of the thoughts to do as other saints have done and the worldly thoughts were coming to his imagination (Au 7). When the former consoled him, the latter gave him momentary delight, subsequently leaving him dissatisfied. Just like these helped his vocational discernment, the contrasting imaginations in the meditation of two standards help a person to distinguish the imaginations and discern his/her vocation based on consolations and desolations.

### **Ascendancy vs. descendancy**

In order to discern the vocation from the perspective of two standards, one must understand the descend (Kenosis) of Jesus, which characterizes obeying only God and not yielding to the powers of this world. The world presents us with self-sufficiency. It offers the desire for self-affirmation (self-love). Arzubialde calls this moving upwards (ascendancy)<sup>243</sup>. On the other

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<sup>241</sup> Cf. I. Errandonea, "Sobre la Meditacion de Dos Banderas", *Manresa* 4 (1928): 160; Just like the role of the enemy of human nature is only an aid to contemplate Christ, the call of the temporal king in the Kingdom Exercise is a help to contemplate the call of the eternal king (SE 91). In this regard, the role of the temporal king and the enemy of human nature seems to be similar, which is to help a person in his/her vocational discernment.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Arzubialde, 385.

hand, Jesus has God as his only security and depends only on Him. It is expressed in his most radical obedience to God's will<sup>244</sup>. This attitude of Jesus, which we are called to follow, is the movement downward (descendancy). The recognition of these two pulls of ascendance and descendancy helps us to be aware of the deceptions of the evil spirit. Any attitude that ascends our self-love, self-will and self-interest deviates us from our authentic response to the call of God. But on the other hand, our identification with the person of Jesus, who descends, makes us respond to the call of God.

There are two possible responses, according to this exercise of two standards. One is temptation and deception and the another is the acceptance of incarnate salvation<sup>245</sup>. One is to be at the banner of Lucifer and the other is to be at the banner of Christ. Although the choice has been made, there is a possibility that we can be trapped in both. In other words, both following Lucifer and following Christ may lead us to descendancy. On the one hand, the temptations may prevent us from following Christ and on the other hand, even if the temptations cannot succeed in preventing us from following Christ, they may hinder us from cementing our bond with Christ or strengthening our true discipleship of Christ<sup>246</sup>. Even while following Christ in good faith and accepting the incarnate salvation, the evil spirit may tempt us to live a double standard life that prevents us from our authentic following of Christ.

### **The imagery of a human cell to understand the descendancy**

In the background of ascendancy and descendancy, our ultimate question is: What is our innermost desire? When our innermost desire is self-affirmation or self-love (with or without following Christ), it is in accordance with what the world offers as presented by Lucifer (descendancy). When communication with God is apparent in the fallen state of man, self-affirmation overtakes the will of God. Ultimately, it leads to the denial of God<sup>247</sup>.

This can be understood by the imagery of a human cell that is attacked by the virus cell. It is diagrammatically portrayed as follows<sup>248</sup>:

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<sup>244</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 385.

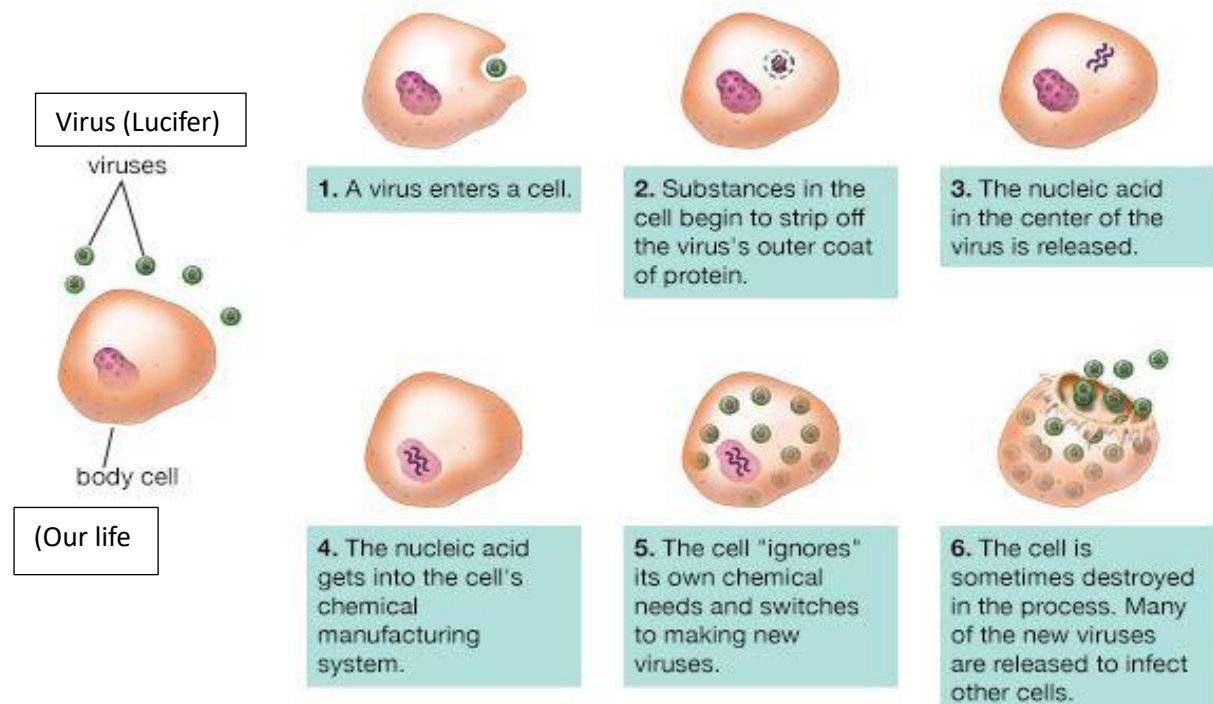
<sup>245</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>248</sup> Diagrammatic representation of virus invading a human cell, Consulted on 20 January 2024, <https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=diagrammatic+representation+of+virus+invading+a+cell&form=HDRSC4&first=1>.

## How a virus invades a cell



Diagrammatic representation of the virus invading the human cell to explain the deception of Lucifer

In the beginning, the immunity (the consolation of God within us) of the human cell (our life) does not allow the virus cell (the enemy of human nature<sup>249</sup>) to attack it. When the human cell loses its immunity, the virus cell finds its way into the human cell (1). Similarly, the enemy of human nature enters our life in times of our lack of commitment to God. In the second stage, the substances in the cell begin to strip off the virus's outer coat of protein (2). This signifies that our fragile life does not recognize the tactics of the enemy of human nature and allows it to be part of us. In the third stage, the nucleic acid present in the centre of the virus is released into the human cell (3). Similarly, our life allows the enemy to dictate and rule us. In the fourth stage, the nucleic acid gets into the cell's chemical manufacturing system (4). In the same way, our self-affirmation or self-love (an enemy of human nature) becomes the centre of our life, which dictates our further decisions. In the fifth stage, the cell ignores its own chemical needs and switches to making new viruses (5). This signifies that our self-love goes on to produce new elements of enemy of human nature in us, transforming us completely dominated by the

<sup>249</sup> Ignatius calls Lucifer as the enemy of human nature. It is mentioned eight times in the *Spiritual Exercises* (7.10.135.136. 325. 326. 327. 334). "Lucifer" itself is mentioned three times (136. 137. 138). Other possible identifications of Lucifer are: the enemy (8.12.217.274. 314. 320.325. 329. 333. 347. 349. 350), our enemy (345), devil (141. 281), evil angel [331. 332], evil leader (139), evil spirit (333): Arzubialde, 386.

tactics of the enemy. In the final stage, the cell is destroyed and new viruses are released, which continue to infect other cells (6). This signifies that the dominant enemy within us continues to attack all the possible goodness in us. Thus, in a systematic way, the enemy of human nature distances us totally from following Christ.

### **Outside influence that hinders our sincere following of Christ**

There is no doubt that the wealth and the honour of this world are the gifts of God. Nothing in itself is evil. The problem arises when we idolize these worldly things and allow them to dominate us at the cost of forgetting God. Human freedom gets conditioned when we show resistance to the love of God and allow external factors to influence our life.

Secondly, society can also manipulate our choice to follow Christ. We may become conditioned by the response that others give to God. This may positively influence us but hinder our discerning capacity. Thus, both positive and negative influences from outside may lead to the failure of vocational discernment.

### **What does truly help our vocational discernment?**

The self-emptying (kenosis) of Christ is the inspiration and model for vocational discernment.

«Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross» (Phil 2, 5-8).

This is a descend to nothingness so that, from there, God can carry out salvation.

On the one hand, Eve was tempted by the serpent to ascend herself from the state of nothingness to be like God (cf. Gen 3,5). On the other hand, as mentioned above, God, from the sovereignty, descends to be nothing. God chooses to be the form of a slave in order to make human being receive the form of God within himself<sup>250</sup>. Poverty and humiliation are intrinsic to the descendancy of God in Christ Jesus. At the level of descendancy of Christ, we are called to be under his banner. We are invited be with Jesus in his kenosis state of poverty and humility. The entrance door to our response to the call of God is imitating Christ in His emptiness. We can strive to save our soul at this level of emptiness. We are free from our inordinate attachment when we respond to God's call in his emptiness with total freedom and indifference.

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<sup>250</sup> Cf. Arzubialde, 392.

### 2.2.2.3. A Meditation on the Three Classes of Persons (SE 149-157)

In the Two Standards, we are invited to choose Christ through a process of discernment and in the Three Classes of Persons, we are invited to get rid of disordinate attachment to things in order to follow Christ in the best way possible (SE 149). In the letter to Philipians, St Paul's wish is that our love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so that we may discern what is excellent about something more than adherence to a general movement towards what is good (cf. Phil 1,9). The words of St Paul are closely related to the meditation of the Three classes of Persons. In this meditation, we focus on how our adherence to what seems to be good deviates us from our excellent way of following Christ.

#### A textual understanding

The term «Three classes of persons» is translated from the vulgate version of the SE<sup>251</sup>, which states it as *tribus hominum classibus* (Three classes of men). The Spanish text names it *Tres Binarios*. It comes from the Latin word *Binarius*, which means double or pair. According to the Diccionario de Lengua Española, Binarios is composed of two elements, units, or numbers<sup>252</sup>. But in the context of this exercise, it is referred to as a prototype or standardized model of an indeterminate person<sup>253</sup>.

This meditation is a complement to the exercise of two standards and indispensable preparation for the election in order that it may help the exercitants in their election by freeing themselves from affective conditioning, which seeks the natural security of possession rather than that which comes from being in God's hands<sup>254</sup>.

#### A brief schema of the meditation

The three classes persons in the Spiritual Exercises are briefed in the following manner:

The Person Typical of the First Class would like to get rid of this attachment to the acquired money, in order to find God in peace and be able to attain salvation. But this person does not take the means, even to the hour of death (EE 153).

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<sup>251</sup> Cf. Antonio Albuquerque, “*Binarios*”, in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 230; The vulgate version of the SE was completed in the year 1547. Since the *versio prima* was written in crude Latin in 1541, it could not be submitted to the ecclesiastical authorities for approval. Therefore, the vulgate version was written and it was officially approved by Pope Paul III in 1548: *Sancti Ignatii de Loyola, Exercitia Spiritualia*, Josephus Calveras and Candidus de Dalmases, (eds.), Roma 1969 (MHSI 100), 216.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. Real Academia Española. Diccionario de la lengua española, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 2001. See also in: Albuquerque, “*Binarios*”, 230.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Arzubialde, 404.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 403.

The Person Typical of the Second Class also desires to get rid of the attachment, but in such a way that she or he will keep the acquired money; and that thus God will come to where this person desires. No decision is made to dispose of the money in order to go to where God is, even though that would be the better state for this individual (EE 154).

The Person Typical of the Third-Class desires to get rid of the attachment, but in such a way that there remains no inclination either to keep the acquired money or to dispose of it. Instead, such a one desires to keep it or reject it solely according to what God our Lord will move one's will to choose, and also according to what the person himself or herself will judge to be better for the service and praise of the Divine Majesty (EE 155)

The above-mentioned three classes of persons show certain similarity and dissimilarity among them, which is described as follows:

		<b>First Person (SE 153)</b>	<b>Second Person (SE 154)</b>	<b>Third Person (SE 155)</b>
<b>Similarity</b>	<b>Situation</b>	Disordered attachment (Ten thousand ducats)	Disordered attachment (Ten thousand ducats)	Disordered attachment (Ten thousand ducats)
	<b>Desire</b>	Desire to get rid of the attachment and do the will of God.	Desire to get rid of the attachment and do the will of God.	Desire to get rid of the attachment and do the will of God.
	<b>Intention</b>	Good intention	Good intention	Good intention
<b>Semi-similarity (Similarity between the first and third but dissimilar from the second)</b>	<b>Affection</b>	Wants to remove the affection for the things acquired.	Deliberate resolution to keep things acquired. By preserving the things, he wants to eliminate the attachment from the heart. He does not want to remove the disordered affection.	Wants to remove the affection for the things acquired.
<b>Dissimilarity</b>	<b>Action</b>	He does not make any effort to remove the disordered affection until the hour of death.	Wants God to come to him rather than go to God.	There is no inclination to keep the acquired things or not to keep them. There is inner freedom to choose what God wants from him.

This exercise is a clear example of how to examine our life in relation to these three classes of persons. In a broader view, the first two are on the same level and the third one is extraordinary, an ideal way of following Christ. What distinguishes the first from the second is his/her affection and action. The first one is eager to remove the affection to things but lethargic in

doing so. The second one is a compromising person who neither wants to remove the affection nor attempts to do it. Only the third one is not only detached from things but also surrenders himself/herself to what God wants, since He is the master of his/her life. From the result of the semi-similarities in the above table, the first one is closer to the third, since the first person is similar to the third in affection and dissimilar only in action. Hence, the first one is closer to becoming a detached person than the second. For the second person to be a third person, he/she can become the first person in affection and then become the third person in action.

### **Towards vocational discernment**

The process of vocational discernment has already passed through the stages of the experience of God's forgiveness and acceptance, a total yes to God's call and faithfulness and being at the side of Christ despite the attempts of temptation and deceit by the evil spirit. If the meditation of the two standards that we have already discussed reveals the antagonistic values by which life inevitably operates, then the meditation of the three classes of persons, as Arzubialde says, helps the one who discerns his/her vocation to assess the degree of transformation of the world of his affections and his actual degree of freedom (indifference) against the ideal prototype of man available before God. Through this meditation, the discerning person also identifies his/her unconscious self-justification mechanisms before preparing himself to make the election of a state of life<sup>255</sup>. What is required of a person who is heading towards election is self-assessment and identification of one's whereabouts at the level of affection. This meditation does not demand him/her to let go of the possession that he/she has or needs, as Arzubialde says that possession is not a sinful passion. It is a necessary requirement of every human being<sup>256</sup>. Instead, it asks him/her to purify the affection for things and be indifferent in life. Thus, it is all about mastering affections and orienting life in the way that Christ expects from his followers.

Arzubialde also says that this meditation aims at the psychological and emotional wellbeing of the discerning person with regard to possession<sup>257</sup>. Having things exists in an external realm. What goes on in our mind and heart regarding our things is our internal condition. If having things unsettles our internal wellbeing, then there is no detachment. In this situation we become slaves to our things and do not obey the will of God in our life. Therefore, the identification of our internal condition is not sufficient. We need to take steps to cultivate the detachment to

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<sup>255</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 404.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 406.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*



things and focus on psychological well-being that makes us internally free while heading towards the election.

During this meditation, beyond the awareness of the state of a discerning person, a real transformation can be achieved through authentic discernment. In what way, do we need transformation?

All of us need to live, and for this, we need security in life. Detachment, or being indifferent to things, is not detaching ourselves from the security that everyone needs in life. What is important is a transformation of security. It is a transformation of the security that we have in our possessions into a new experience of security. Santiago Arzubialde says that God is our true security<sup>258</sup>. Ultimately, it's our search for seeking what pleases God alone, which gives us fullness of happiness and ultimate security. It can be granted by God alone.

Therefore, what is required of a discerning individual is to look at those aspects of life that concentrate on the attachment of things and take away one's emotional freedom to follow Jesus. Then he/she will be able to follow a creaturely vocation as discussed in the PF in such a way that he/she surrenders his/her will to God's will.

From the point of vocational discernment, this meditation does not ask us to get rid of our affections. Affections are part of the human being, which he/she carries with him/her while doing the will of God in any state of life. Ignacio Iglesias says that it is not about killing the affections but about changing them from not purely or weakly love of God to only for the service of God, our Lord (EE 155)<sup>259</sup>.

To conclude, this meditation observes the indifference of a person who wants to discern the vocation. As already said in the PF, indifference is the disposition of the person who wants to make an election. Thus, indifference is not an election but a condition prior to the election, without which we cannot make an election<sup>260</sup>. And so, with the attitude of the first two classes of persons, who are not indifferent, we cannot make an election. Only with the attitude of the third class of person, we can make an election to a state of life.

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<sup>258</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 406.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. I. Iglesias, "Los tres binarios de Hombres: texto y forma de exposición y reflexión bíblico-teológicas", *Manresa* 58 (1986): 58-59.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 505.

#### 2.2.2.4. The Three Ways of Being Humble (SE 165- 168)

In Ignatian spirituality, humility is a central virtue for those who want to follow Christ with joy and fervour. It entails putting the other person at the centre of our being and turning our hearts away from self-interests in order to completely surrender to Jesus and His life and mission<sup>261</sup>. In this sense, «The Three Ways of Being Humble» seeks an attitude of Kenosis of Christ, his self-emptying nature for the love of the humanity (cf. Phil 2,6-7).

In fact, «The Three Ways of Being Humble» was known as «The Ways of Love» in the initial notes on the SE. In the notes of Doctor Ortiz, the retreatant of Ignatius in Monte Casino, we read «The ways of love» instead of «The ways of being humble». Also, in the notes of Helyar, an Irish priest, who did his SE under the guidance of Peter Faber in 1535, we find «Tres grados de amor». But in the definitive version of the SE in 1547, it is titled as «Tres maneras de humildad». Though the kenosis of Christ reveals His humility, it also shows His love for humanity. Love goes down and identifies with the others. These characteristics of love are also the characteristics of humility. Therefore, it is significant that Ignatius places humility in the place of love in the SE<sup>262</sup>.

Ignatius never titles this exercise as meditation or contemplation, as he does with almost all the other exercises. Rather, «he presents it...as a consideration which is to pervade the Exercises, and also the time between them, on all the coming days devoted to the election»<sup>263</sup>. And so, this exercise becomes a constant vibe during the second week of the SE, in view of the election.

The word «humility» has a specific reference in the meditation of the two standards. It creates an intimate relationship between «Two standards» and «Three ways of being humble». Santiago Arzubialde says that the meditation of two standards and the three ways of humility form an inseparable unity, a single spiritual experience, although the second document was elaborated by Ignatius much later<sup>264</sup>. From the point of election, it forms unity with «The three classes of persons» as well<sup>265</sup>. But as far as the placement of this exercise in the Spiritual Exercises is concerned, it does not seem to justify this unity because while the «Two standards» and «The three classes of persons» are placed on the fourth day of the second week, this

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<sup>261</sup> Cf. Lisa A. Fullam, “Humildad”, 76957.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. Josep Giménez Meliá, “Revisitando las «tres maneras de humildad»”, *Manresa* 96 (2024): 115.

<sup>263</sup> George E. Ganss, ed., *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius* (St Luis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 141.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Arzubialde, 380.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. Elias Royon, “Las tres maneras de humildad en la dinámica del seguimiento de Jesús (EE 164-168)”, *Manresa* 58 (1986): 69.

exercise is placed after the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the second week. This indicates that even though the three exercises form unity between them, they are not exclusive precursors for the election. But rather, all the contemplations of the mysteries of Christ that are placed throughout the second week play vital role in view of the election.

While going through every word that constructs the exercise of three degrees of humility, the question that arises is: In what way does this exercise have to contribute to vocational discernment or to choose a state of life, which is concretized in the following exercise of election? Let us look for it in the three different ways of being humble.

### **The first way of being humble**

«The First Way of Being Humble is necessary for eternal salvation, and consists in this. I so lower and humble myself, as far as is in my power, that in all things I may be obedient to the law of God our Lord. Consequently, even though others would make me lord of all the creatures in this world, or even to save my temporal life, never would I reach a decision to violate a commandment either human or divine which binds me under mortal sin» (SE 165).

Obedience to the law of God, a fundamental attitude of love, is the focal point of the first degree of humility. Whoever has not yet come to terms with the first degree of humility is not yet ready to engage in the election of life. Such a person needs to engage himself in other meditations and contemplations until he comes to greater humility, which is dealt with in the second degree of humility<sup>266</sup>.

Casanovas says that the one who has nothing more than the first degree of humility is not able to make a good and healthy election since he has not gotten rid of multiple disordered condition<sup>267</sup>. Therefore, vocational discernment can never take place at this first way of humility. It is just a precondition to verify where a discerning person stands.

### **The second way of being humble**

According to this,

«I do not desire or feel myself strongly attached to having wealth rather than poverty, or honor rather than dishonor, or a long life rather than a short one» (SE 166).

It highlights the Ignatian attitude of indifference, which is already discussed above in the PF and in the Three Classes of Persons. The attitude of indifference reflected here is similar to the

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<sup>266</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 504.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Ignacio Casanovas, *Ejercicios de San Ignacio: Comentario y explicación de los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Barcelona: Balmes, 1945), 63.

attitude of PF and the condition of the third class of person<sup>268</sup>. When a person discerns his/her vocation based on the second kind of humility, he/she remains indifferent to any choices in life. He does not choose anything but rather submits himself to God and waits for God's will to manifest itself to him<sup>269</sup>.

Though the third way of being humble, which will be discussed shortly, is the most perfect one, this second way has the potential to knock on the door of election. In other words, those who have an attitude of indifference proper to the second way of being humble will be able to make an election. Therefore, at this stage, vocational discernment involves examination of whether one is detached from wealth, honour and a long life as mentioned above and observation of whether one is indifferent to anything that God wills.

### **The third way of being humble**

According to this,

«I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than wealth; contempt with Christ laden with it rather than honors. Even further, I desire to be regarded as a useless fool for Christ, who before me was regarded as such, rather than as a wise or prudent person in this world» (SE 167).

This is full of dynamism, since it shows more rigor than the second one. According to this, indifference to poverty and wealth, honour and humiliation is not sufficient. One must desire poverty and humility. At this stage, one seeks more inclination towards poverty than wealth and wishes to be crazy for Christ rather than remaining wise and prudent<sup>270</sup>.

The third kind of humility is the most perfect one. Miguel Ángel Fiorito says that this humility is a grace of God, which everyone does not receive from Him<sup>271</sup>. According to Elias Royon, it's a complete resignation of one's will, an ideal situation to enter the election<sup>272</sup>. But, from the point of vocational discernment, it is not necessary to have this third degree of humility to make an election of a state of life.

From the perspective of *magis*, the third way of being humble is related to PF. The PF, as an initiation of the Spiritual Exercises, does not restrict itself to an attitude of indifference. From the point of view of election, it is also concerned with desiring and choosing only that which

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<sup>268</sup> Cf. Royon, "Las tres maneras de humildad", 73.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 505.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. Royon, "Las tres maneras de humildad", 73.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 505.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. Royon, "Las tres maneras de humildad", 73.

is more conducive to the end for which we are created (SE 23)<sup>273</sup>. Similarly, the third way of being humble, which goes beyond indifference and chooses poverty and humiliation with Christ, reflects on *magis*. Thus, the third way of being humble becomes a conclusion to the initiatory text of the PF<sup>274</sup>.

This third way of being humble, an identification with the person of Jesus, is not something that one can achieve. If it were achievable, it would go against the core idea of humility itself. It is not a result of human effort<sup>275</sup>. The grace of God is the only possible way through which we can have the third kind of humility.

#### **2.2.2.5. The Election (SE 169-188)**

After a study of various aspects of the Spiritual Exercises that lead to the election, we have arrived at the decisive moment regarding vocational discernment. Seeking and finding the will of God has gone through so many processes of ordering the affections by pointing out those things that hinder authentic discernment. A person who has reached the stage of election is said to have gone through previous authentication. Without the previous authentication, he is not able to make an election, as SE says that seeking and finding God's will takes place only after the removal of disordered affections (SE 1).

Election is a choice in which the harmony between divine freedom and human freedom must be evident in all its purity<sup>276</sup>. Since this harmony is so fragile and is threatened by human infidelity, care must be taken that the purity of harmony is not lost before the election.

The arising question is: Who is the one who makes election? Is it God who elects the one whom he wants to serve Him in the way he wants? If so, what is the role of the discerning person in an election? From the biblical study in the first chapter, we have an answer that God elects (calls) whom he wants to send on mission (cf. Jn 15,16). In the *Spiritual Exercises* too, we realize that it is God who calls and confirms the vocation (SE 180, 183, 184). What is expected of the person who is called is to say yes to the call of God with total freedom and reverence to God.

The same logic applies here in the election of the SE. God's yes of election is related to the yes of human beings. The yes of human beings is a response to God's yes of election. It means that

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<sup>273</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, *Meditacion sobre los Ejercicios de San Ignacio* (Barcelona: Herder, 1971), 27.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Royon, "Las tres maneras de humildad", 74.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. Balthasar, 215.

a human being chooses what God has chosen. At the same time, the election of a human being is not less important. But as Hans Urs Von Baltasar says, the two yes do not have the same rank, since the creature's yes must be understood as «the concise co-realization» of God's eternal yes to him<sup>277</sup>.

This co-realization takes place through discerning the vocation. It takes place through a question: In which state or way of life does the Divine Majesty wishes us to serve Him? (SE 135). It needs a discerned investigation, which we have already discussed through a series of exercises of the second week as part of the preparation for the election. We have come to a conclusion about how we need to dispose ourselves to elect whatever state of life God wants us to elect. When a discerning person has disposed himself/herself fully, concerning the requirements of election, he/she can enter the world of election.

### **When shouldn't we make an election?**

Even though we have a clear understanding of those factors that are necessary for an election, let's briefly point out some elements during which we should not make an election on the basis of vocation from God.

Firstly, as SE says, if we have already made an unchangeable election such as marriage, priesthood, etc., we cannot change the election or make another election since it cannot be undone. But if it was not made well or made with disordered affection, the possible solution is repentance and exploration of how to lead a life within the decision that is made. Since this election was improperly made, it does not seem to be a divine vocation (SE 172). Therefore, care must be taken by the one who elects a state of life that it is done through vocational discernment, which demands being in constant touch with God in prayer in order to know what is the will of God is.

Secondly, as we know from the series of exercises that we have discussed prior to the election, indifference to any state of life is required to make a sincere election free of disordinate attachment. Indifference of the second degree of humility is the minimum attitude required, without which we should not make an election<sup>278</sup>. As Hugo Rahner stresses, an election must not be influenced by the flesh or the world (SE 173)<sup>279</sup>.

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<sup>277</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. Alfredo Sampaio Costa, "Elección", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 726.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Hugo Rahner, 128.

Thirdly, even after asking the graces during meditations or contemplations of those exercises prior to the election that are dealt with above, if a person is not cohesive in life, which means, as Alfredo Sampaio Costa says, if a person is light-tempered and inconsistent, if he has some uncontrolled passions or bad habits and if there are no signs of graces that are received, he cannot make election<sup>280</sup>.

Fourthly, a relationship with God is a necessary virtue for good and sound vocational discernment. Michael Simpson provides an analogy of the human relationship to understand this statement. When we grow in love for another human person, we acquire more sensitivity, which helps us recognize what is in conformity with that love and what is in disharmony or conflict with it<sup>281</sup>. True discernment takes place when we are deeply in relationship with God in prayer out of our love for Him. A relationship with God filled with love increases our sensitivity to understand the will of God for us. It distinguishes between what is in harmony with our relationship with God and what is not. Therefore, when there is an absence of prayer, the relationship with God is distanced, leading to a struggle to make a sound and right discernment and consequently the election.

### **The first time of making an election**

«The First Time is an occasion when God our Lord moves and attracts the will in such a way that a devout person, without doubting or being able to doubt, carries out what was proposed» (SE 175).

Arzubialde says that the first time of making an election belongs to the genus of consolation without the previous cause (CSCP)<sup>282</sup>. The rule of discernment regarding consolation without the previous cause is:

«Only God our Lord can give the soul consolation without a preceding cause. For it is the prerogative of the Creator alone to enter the soul, depart from it, and cause a motion in it which draws the whole person into love of His Divine Majesty. By “without [a preceding] cause” I mean without any previous perception or understanding of some object by means of which the consolation just mentioned might have been stimulated, through the intermediate activity of the person’s acts of understanding and willing» (SE 330).

God moves the will that evokes in a person what He desires of him at a deeper level. This takes place in such a way that the person does not doubt His will. This is immediately followed by a

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<sup>280</sup> Cf. Costa, “Elección”, 726.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Michael Simpson, “Philosophical certitude and the Ignatian Election”, *The Way supplement* 24 (1975): 59.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. Arzubialde, 458.

radical change in his life. This intervention of God without the previous cause creates a discontinuity with what man has experienced before<sup>283</sup>.

Extracting some points on CSCP from the Chapter 28 of the *Ejercitatorio de la Vida Spiritual* of García Jiménez de Cisneros, José Garcia de Castro says that it is similar to what Ignatius says in the SE 330. According to him, in this consolation, firstly, there is the absence of an object. CSCP takes place without exercising our understanding or without speculating or thinking about it. Secondly, it points out the exclusivity of God, which means that this consolation is the exclusive work of God. Thirdly, it discovers the passivity of the one who receives this consolation. The soul of the receiver of this consolation is not active but passive; so to speak, God is the initiator of this consolation. God wants to make himself experienced and so he gives this consolation. Fourthly, love is the fundamental and exclusive content of this consolation. There is no place for the brain and understanding. God moves His will with love<sup>284</sup>.

This information, without a doubt, justifies the fact that there is consolation in the first time of making election. Consolation takes place at the exact moment when God moves His will. Since God has moved this consolation, there is no deception since deception can take place only through the intervention of the evil spirit. Hence, it is a genuine consolation, without any doubt.

This is an extraordinary and straight-forward election. P. Gil Gonzalez says that there is little to speak about the first time of making an election. It does not fall under the rule, nor should God be asked to choose such a way. This election gives so much satisfaction to the soul that there seems to be no room for doubt<sup>285</sup>.

Unlike Arzubialde, Luis M. Garcia, mentioning the words of Alfredo Sampaio, says that this election is neither illumination nor can it be identified with CSCP. It consists of God moving the will of the exerciser<sup>286</sup>. The point of view of Luis M. Garcia seems to be more consistent than that of Arzubialde. Therefore, the first time of making an election must be further clarified and confirmed with the other two times of making an election discussed below.

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<sup>283</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 458-459.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Garcia de Castro, *El Dios Emergente*, 109.

<sup>285</sup> Cf. Gil González Dávila, "Directorio del P. Gil González", in *Los Directorios de Ejercicios*, ed. Miguel Lop Sebastián (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2000), 284.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. Domínguez, *La Entrevista en los Ejercicios Espirituales*, 206.



## **The second time of making an election**

«The Second Time is present when sufficient clarity and knowledge are received from the experience of consolations and desolations, and from experience in the discernment of various spirits» (SE 176).

This election takes place in the light of the movement of the spirits, which needs to be discerned. Concretely speaking, the second time of making an election plays a vital role in vocational discernment because, through it, we concretely discern the consolation and the desolation and search where these feelings come from. The vocational discernment explained in the first part of this chapter on the life of the St Ignatius is an immediate help in knowing the distinction between consolations and desolations.

How does this second time of making an election takes place? Miguel Angel Fiorito says that there are two ways of practicing it. One is waiting for the movement of the spirits to occur in us and the other is provoking it in us<sup>287</sup>.

The meditation of two standards, which we have already discussed, is a help to wait for the movement of the spirits to occur in us. In the meditation, both the Lord and the devil speak to us through a variety of spirits such as joy or sadness, encouragement or discouragement, anger or fear, etc., which eventually give us consolation or desolation. In consolation, we have positive feelings (SE 316), but in desolation, we have negative feelings (SE 317). The former are guided by the good spirit and the latter by the evil spirit. The rules of discernment for the first week (SE 313-327) give more information to identify and distinguish the language of the Lord and the devil<sup>288</sup>.

At this time, we need to keep in mind the tactics of the evil spirit. Both good and evil angels are able to cause consolations in the soul. When the good angel acts for the progress of the soul so that the person may grow from good to better, the evil angel causes consolation to his own damnable intention (SE 331). This is a tactic of the evil angel that takes the person away from the purpose of God to which he/she is oriented. Here, the evil angel, who appears as an angel of light, attracts the upright soul with holy thoughts and then gradually works to gain his own way by luring the soul to his own wicked intentions and covert deceptions (SE 332). And so, we need to pay close attention to the train of thoughts at the beginning, middle and end. In the meditation, if the good thoughts are constant throughout, it is a sign of a good angel, but if the

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<sup>287</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 508.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 509.

thoughts were good in the beginning and then eventually, they disturb our soul, taking away peace and tranquillity, it's a sign of an evil spirit (SE 333).

When we do not merely wait for the consolations and desolations to take place but want to provoke the movement of the spirits that give consolations and desolations, we need to dedicate some time to prayer. During this prayer, one day, we keep before God one of the two choices about the state of life to which God may call us. Another day, we spend time in prayer on another alternative. During both alternatives, we keep in touch with our feelings. The choice that gives lasting and constant consolations of joy, contentment, encouragement and courage would mean that it is pleasing to God. But, on the other hand, the choice that gives desolation of sadness, discouragement, etc., or consolation in the beginning and then desolation at the end does not please God<sup>289</sup>. The former seems to be the will of God and the latter is not. The repetition of the prayer can further clarify and confirm the will of God.

According to Miguel Angel Fiorito, the Lord's agreement with our choice can be manifested not with consolation but with peace and without any other feelings. This he calls negative consolation, which means lack of desolation. This peace can be attained in silence. This takes us to the world of scripture, in which God meets Moses, Abraham, Samuel, etc. in their solitary moments of silence and gives them courage and joy to carry out the mission entrusted to them.

Since this election is very delicate and requires attentive listening to God's communication in order to distinguish the feelings of consolations and desolations, patience is the key, which makes the election more authentic.

This second time of making election demands the establishment of a constant and close relationship with God, which further helps to discern His will rather easily. This is reflected in the words of Casanovas, who underlines that this election asks for a union and a rapport of our soul with God. It makes our soul to know the desires and tastes of the Lord regarding the matter proposed for election<sup>290</sup>. St Ignatius's relationship with God in prayer had grown in such a way that, towards the end of his life, he had an ease in finding God. Every time and any hour he wished, he was able to find God (Au 99). Therefore, a spiritual relationship with God through meditation or contemplation is determinant for the second time of making an election.

This further makes the discerning person extremely vigilant against the deception of the evil spirit, which can interfere with the rectitude and purity of the election. This process is also open

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<sup>289</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 509.

<sup>290</sup> Cf. Casanovas, 99.

for further confirmation, which can take place through the ongoing discernment of daily life, which keeps strengthening the election for the greater service of God. Further confirmation is necessary because, as mentioned in the beginning of this part, according to the second time of election, it is not a matter of opting for certainty but rather for quite clarity (SE 176). Even though the election has been made properly and without disordered affection, there is always a possibility to reform, grow and deepen the state of life embraced (SE 171-173)<sup>291</sup>.

### **The third time of making an election**

«The Third Time is one of tranquillity. I consider first the end for which human beings are born, namely, to praise God our Lord and to save their souls; then, desiring this, as the means I elect a life or state of life within the limits of the Church, in order to be helped in the service of my Lord and the salvation of my soul. By a time of tranquillity, I mean one when the soul is not being moved one way and the other by various spirits and uses its natural faculties in freedom and peace» (SE 177).

In this time of election, the search to find the will of God is one of tranquillity because of the absence of «*variedad de espíritus*»<sup>292</sup> (variety of spirits). This distinguishes it from the second time of making an election. According to Polanco, tranquillity signifies balance in the inclinations<sup>293</sup>. It means that the person is indifferent to any state of life in such a way that he/she is inclined to the most perfect one, according to the axiom of Jesus Christ. In the absence of the variety of spirits (state of tranquillity), inclination towards the most perfect decision of one's vocation takes place through intelligence and reason<sup>294</sup>.

There are two different methods to approach the third time of making an election. Though they follow the path of intelligence and reasoning, making an election ends up in the presence of God, where confirmation of the election takes place.

The first method consists of five points. In vocational discernment, it is approached keeping in mind the two choices of life (married or priestly-religious life) in front of the election. Secondly, the method recalls the PF of the SE (SE 179). The presence of PF again at this crucial juncture indicates that PF is intrinsic to the whole process of vocational discernment. Here, the PF does not act as a reminder but as a confirmer of indifference. One has to make sure that

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<sup>291</sup> Cf. María Mata Correas-Elisa Pérez Avellán, “Discernimiento para la elección de la vida consagrada: aportaciones de la psicología vocacional y la espiritualidad ignaciana”, *Manresa* 95 (2023): 335

<sup>292</sup> Fiorito, 508.

<sup>293</sup> Cf. Casanovas, 101.

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 510.

he/she is totally indifferent to any state of life with ordered affection while approaching this method.

Then, asking God to move my will and to put in my mind what I need to do regarding the matters proposed (SE 180), I must note down the reasons for and against each alternative of the two choices (SE 181). While doing this, I must keep in mind the affections and feelings that I experience (SE 182) regarding both alternatives. Once the election is done with great diligence, I must pray before God so that God may accept and confirm the decision (SE 183).

Miguel Ángel Fiorito says that this method has an advantage. Once we have made an election and confirmed it before God, what seems to us to be God's will for us, the reasons and feelings of other alternative that we have noted down, can be a source of temptation<sup>295</sup> against the choice that we have made and confirmed before God<sup>296</sup>. Thus, this method helps us identify the temptations that the evil spirit may cause us and challenges the election.

The second method follows the same system as the first one. The difference is that there are four rules in this method, which replace the five points of the first method. The first rule is:

«That love which moves me and brings me to choose the matter in question should descend from above, from the love of God; in such a way that the person making the election should perceive beforehand that the love, whether greater or less, which he or she has for the matter being chosen is solely for the sake of our Creator and Lord» (SE 184).

Love for God is the ultimate objective of any discerned decision. If love for the matter in question does not flow from the love of God, election takes place without the presence and the plan of God. Alfredo Sampaio Costa says using this rule for an election is not purely rational but more affective. It is a matter of experiencing the love of God as the motive that leads me to choose<sup>297</sup>. According to the second, third and fourth rules, a person makes the election by imagining himself/herself as an unknown person (SE 185), or considering the day of his/her own death, or imagining and considering the day of his/her final judgement (SE 186-187). These three rules make a person imagine himself/herself as someone else and someone in the

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<sup>295</sup> The evil spirit may tempt using the consolations of the other alternative. Therefore, the fourth rule of discernment for the second week must be applied here, which says: «It is characteristic of the evil angel, who takes on the appearance of an angel of light, to enter by going along the same way as the devout soul and then to exit by his own way with success for himself. That is, he brings good and holy thoughts attractive to such an upright soul and then strives little by little to get his own way, by enticing the soul over to his own hidden deceits and evil intentions» (SE 332).

<sup>296</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 510.

<sup>297</sup> Sampaio Costa, "Elección", 730.

most extreme situation. These rules help a person to be more objective and accurate in his/her deliberations.

Casanovas says that when it is an election of great importance, the first method is used. But during the election of the simplest things, which need quick solutions, any one of the rules of the second method could be used<sup>298</sup>. Since the election of a state of life is of greater importance, it is better not to use the second method independently of the others. It can be used as confirmation of an election made during other two times or using the first method of a third time.

All the three times of making election can be considered as inter-related methods of election. The second time can become the confirmation of the first and the third time can become the confirmation of the second. Even the third time of making an election could be confirmed by the second. But José Calveras says that if the election is made during the first time, it is not appropriate to use the other two times. It would be a disrespect to the divine dignity to have shown His will in such a manifest manner<sup>299</sup>. On the other hand, G. Dávila says that if a person obtains sufficient clarity to make the election during the second time, he/she does not need to go to the third time<sup>300</sup>. But without disrespecting the independence of the first two times, for greater clarity, other times of the election can be used as confirmation of the election. Alfredo Sampaio also justifies that using other times may be convenient for greater satisfaction<sup>301</sup> and since Luis M. Garcia Dominguez also says that the first time of election is neither illumination nor can it be identified with CSCP<sup>302</sup>, the second time can be used as confirmation of the first time of making an election.

At the same time, Karl Rahner and many other authors especially deny the autonomy of the third time, considering that this must be confirmed through the second time<sup>303</sup>. Since vocational discernment involves identifying and listening to the voice of God in silence, the mere reason of the third time does not authenticate the vocational discernment. Therefore, the third time needs confirmation of the second.

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<sup>298</sup> Cf. Casanovas, 111.

<sup>299</sup> José Calveras, "Buscar y hallar la voluntad divina por los tiempos de elección de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio", *Manresa* 15 (1943): 269.

<sup>300</sup> Sampaio Costa, "Elección", 732.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 732.

<sup>302</sup> Cf. Domínguez, *La Entrevista en los Ejercicios Espirituales*, 206.

<sup>303</sup> Sampaio Costa, "Elección", 730.

As I conclude the topic of election, I would like to mention that it is up to divine goodness to choose the time in which He wants to speak to us and manifest His will to us. We must look forward with hope to what God wants to give us. If He does not communicate His will to us during first or second time of making election, there is a high possibility that he will give us the disposition to make an election to a state of life during the third time.

### **2.2.3. The Third and Fourth Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises**

Every week of the Spiritual Exercises has its own significance in the hearts of the exercitants. And so, the vocational discernment in the Spiritual Exercises values every week and extracts those exercises or elements that are directly connected to an election of a state of life. As we have discussed, the second week, which contains some exercises as preparation for the election, plays a major role in vocational discernment. We have also come to know the initiation role of the first week in vocational discernment. Miguel Ángel Fiorito says that the first week reforms what is deformed and the second week conforms to what is reformed<sup>304</sup>. Then what about the third and the fourth weeks? Do they make their presence known while dealing with the topic of vocational discernment? Miguel Ángel continues saying that the third week confirms what is conformed and the fourth week consummates what is confirmed<sup>305</sup>. Christine Gizard says that if Ignatius prolongs the exercises after the election, it is precisely because he places greater importance on confirmation<sup>306</sup>. It is also because, through the election of the state of life, we elect Jesus. Thus, the third and fourth weeks of the SE are intrinsic to vocational discernment.

The second week has already given some information about confirmation during the election (SE 183, 188). Therefore, confirmation is not a new thing in the third week. But the confirmation of the third week differs from that of the second week. The confirmation of the second week is part of the process of decision-making, since it completes the election. But the confirmation that takes place during the third week is part of the process of actualizing the decision. The decision that is made either to be priest/religious or to follow Christ by responding to His will as a married person is in the actualizing stage in the third week while contemplating the passion of Christ.

An athlete who has decided and confirmed the decision to run a marathon knows the direction and the destination. But every step that he/she takes in order to actualize the decision undergoes

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<sup>304</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 755.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 755.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. Christine Gizard, "Carácter Definitivo Y Confirmación de la Elección", *Revista de Espiritualidad Ignaciana* 117 (2008): 82.

a real test. Every difficulty that he overcomes in the process of running becomes a confirmation of his decision. Similarly, the person who has made the decision to live in a particular state of life contemplates the suffering of Christ and is ready to suffer for Christ while following him. With every move towards the suffering Christ, he/she confirms his/her vocation.

Christine Gizard says that at the beginning of the third week, the spiritual objective is no longer discernment. The exercitant, who was focused on himself/herself during the process of election in the second week, starts decentring himself/herself and moves his/her attention to Christ, who suffers. He also says that the election that is already made will accompany the movement of compassion with Jesus without introducing again the alteration of consolations and desolations<sup>307</sup>. Though one's own focus is not the main objective, the exercitant who has gone through the process of election also passively observes what is happening within himself/herself looking at the suffering of Christ. The exercitant asks for sorrow, regret, and confusion because the Lord is going to his Passion for his/her sins (SE 193) and considers how Christ suffers all this for his/her sins (SE 197). He/she also asks for sorrow with Christ in sorrow; a broken spirit with Christ so broken; tears; and interior suffering because of the great suffering which Christ endured for him/her (SE 203). This is how there is focus on oneself, although it is not active. There is desire to suffer with Christ. This is confirmation of the election.

In the midst of these, there is discernment, which helps to confirm his/her vocation. The Spiritual Exercises focus on a discernment of whether one finds oneself tempted or consoled, desires to possess one virtue or another, or disposes oneself in one way or another, or experiences sorrow or joy over the matter he/she is contemplating (SE 199). According to the third rule of discernment of the first week, consolation is experienced when the soul sheds tears for the passion of Our Lord (SE 316) and according to the fourth rule, desolation is experienced when one is completely listless, tepid, and unhappy and feels separated from our Creator and Lord (SE 317). This discernment becomes the confirmation of the election.

Secondly, Hugo Ryan quotes Polanco, who says that the third week is of special use for the election in cases where the decision for the third degree of humility was not taken with all possible incisiveness during the second week<sup>308</sup>. Though the third degree of humility is not a necessary condition for an election, it strengthens the election. Therefore, if the passion of

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<sup>307</sup> Cf. Gizard, "Carácter Definitivo", 83.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. Hugo Rahner, 131.

Christ during the third week helps the exercitant attain the third degree of humility. It is nothing other than confirmation of the election.

Hugo Ryan also points out the words of Fr Davila who says, «The meditations on the passion give the Election its consistency or shape»<sup>309</sup>. The consistency of consolations through pain and tears for Christ's suffering are the signs of consistency in one's following Christ. Eventually, as Christine Gizzard says, the perspective that was there in the exercitant at the time of the election gets transformed<sup>310</sup> and the election gets confirmed.

As mentioned earlier, according to Miguel Ángel Fiorito, the fourth week of the SE consummates the election. It signifies perfecting the election with the experience of the joy of the resurrection of Christ<sup>311</sup>. On the other, Christine Gizzard maintains that, in the light of Easter, there is confirmation of the election<sup>312</sup>. Both are relational. How? According to the Diccionario de Lengua Española, consummation is realization, execution, or fulfilment<sup>313</sup>. Based on this meaning, the confirmation that Gizzard mentions is closely related to the consummation or fulfilment of the election that is made.

When the election that is made in the second week does not create any obstacles to experience the peace and joy of the resurrection, it is a sign of confirmation of the election<sup>314</sup>. In fact, the election is the result of deep personal love for Christ with total indifference. The person who has the desire to imitate Christ and follow him closely, which has led to election, continues to feel joyful and happy over the great joy and happiness of Christ our Lord (SE 229). But if there is neither contentment nor joy in the glory of the resurrection, the election is questionable.

Secondly, the election allows the person to find taste and sweetness in created things<sup>315</sup>. It means that the person is able to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things (SE 233). The relationship with Christ has become so strong in him/her that he/she sees God living in creatures and dwelling in himself/herself as well. (SE 235). He/she also sees God labouring in the creatures (SE 236) and considers how good things and gifts descend from above (SE 237). This is the deeper effect of the election. God is seen dwelling within and around nature. The entire being gets engulfed by the power of God, which is a sign of confirmation of the election.

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<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>310</sup> Cf. Gizzard, "Carácter Definitivo", 83.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. Fiorito, 859.

<sup>312</sup> Cf. Gizzard, "Carácter Definitivo", 84.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Real Academia Española. Diccionario de la lengua española, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 2001.

<sup>315</sup> Cf. Gizzard, "Carácter Definitivo", 85.



Thus, in the fourth week, there is no vocational discernment as such. But there is a close observation about whether there is a feeling of deeper joy in the resurrection or not. This complements vocational discernment and confirms the vocation of a person.

## CHAPTER 3

### **PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT IN THE CONTEMPORARY WRITINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS AND THE BASIC ELEMENTS THAT SURROUND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT.**

In the first chapter, we have discussed about the theology of vocation and vocational discernment in the Bible. We have realized from the first chapter that our God is relational. He constantly communicates with his people from time to time. He calls some for special functions in his mission. In the New Testament, He communicates through his Son.

In the second chapter, we have discussed the method of vocational discernment with the help of Spiritual Exercises. From the example of the life of Ignatius, we have realized that God walks with us, leads our way and reveals His will for us in our personal dialogue with Him in silence and prayer. According to Josef Maureder, God often acts in a silent manner. Only the listener will hear the word; only the attentive will notice the signpost. The decisive factor in all this is the personal relationship with Christ in silence and prayer, without which it is impossible to follow any vocational path. So, the first thing that has to be done in response to a living relationship with the Lord is to be vigilant<sup>316</sup>. So many factors are involved to reach the moment of being vigilant or to discern the vocation.

Let us see how the recent general congregations and the writings of Pedro Arrupe and Peter Hans Kolvenbach, the recent generals of the Society of Jesus, unfold certain elements of vocational discernment. Then we shall also elaborate on the basic practical elements that surround vocational discernment.

#### **3.1.Vocational discernment in the recent General Congregations of the Society of Jesus**

General Congregations 31-33 have no special focus regarding the aspects of vocation, vocation promotion, or vocational discernment. But, GC 34, 35 and 36 discuss some aspects regarding vocational discernment.

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<sup>316</sup> Cf. Josef Maureder, "La Vocación Requiere Vigilancia", *Revista de Espiritualidad Ignaciana* 39 (2008): 91.

### 3.1.1. GC 34

GC 34 has an exclusive decree on “The Promotions of Vocations”. Even though vocational discernment is not explicitly mentioned in the decree, the elements of vocational discernment that we have described in the first chapters are implicitly mentioned. The decree calls for all the Jesuits to work for vocations. At the same time, it also stresses the point that vocation is a gift from God (GC 34, d10, 1). It implies that the call to work for vocations is nothing but our active collaboration in the mission of God. Vocation is the plan of God and our responsibility is to create a platform for each one to discern the plan of God.

Secondly, vocation promotion is not just a process of searching for the candidates to admit them into a congregation. It is not even promoting a congregation or priesthood. Vocation promotion has a deeper meaning. GC 34 says, «Vocation promotion simply means helping young people hear and respond to the stirrings of the Spirit in their hearts» (GC 34, d10, 2). It is nothing but creating a platform to discern the vocation. It is promoting a person to listen to the voice of God and respond to what God wants him to be. It is not manipulating a person to join a particular religious congregation. It must open a space for a person to any type of Christian response and as GC 34 says, finally, we must respect any particular way the Spirit calls each person (GC 34, d10, 2). Then, why is there concern about the lack of vocations today? According to Enric Puiggrós, the concern is due to the lack of response by the young people if God does not stop calling them. The further analysis again questions whether we are doing sufficiently as a person, a community, or an institution to communicate and promote concrete options as liveable<sup>317</sup>.

Thirdly, the decree says that the young people can only choose what they know and love (GC 34, d10, 2). Therefore, our responsibility is to explain to others the meaning of the call of God, the significance of vocation with biblical examples, some life stories of saints, etc. Particularly, the decree says, «Every Jesuit and every Jesuit community must do everything possible actively to present the Society of Jesus to others in such a way that those whom God calls will know and appreciate who and what we are» (GC 34, d10, 2). Just like Jesus spread the Good News moving from place to place and then the disciples continued the same mission, the others should know that God has a plan for each one and it's our responsibility to discover our vocation.

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<sup>317</sup> Cf. Enric Puiggrós, “Apropiarse de la vida. Acompañamiento ignaciano y discernimiento vocacional”, *Manresa* 90 (2018): 348.

Fourthly, the decree focuses on the image of the Society of Jesus. The quality of life of each Jesuit is the way through which the promotion of vocation is possible. The decree says that the negativity in the Society of Jesus, such as destructive criticism, bitterness, and even contempt for our way of life and the vows, is devastating for those who would like to respond to the call of God through a Jesuit way of life (GC 34, d10, 3). While our inspiring life, our commitment and our concern and care for others in our apostolate inspire them to join us, our discouragement, sadness and lethargy discourage those who are discerning the call of God. This also leads them to doubt the meaning of vocation and vocational discernment.

In similar lines, our positive gestures, our welcoming nature and our closeness and contact with the people reduce our gap with them and create an ambience for others to know, to experience and understand the value of God's call and its necessity as Christians. Though the decree is very short, it reveals four different aspects discussed above, which revolve around the topic of vocational discernment.

### **3.1.2. GC 35 and GC 36**

Unlike CG 34, GC 35 and GC 36 neither have a decree on the topic of vocation nor do they communicate particularly about vocation and vocational discernment. But a little information that we have from them conveys the challenges and problems of vocation today. The decree 2 of GC 35 says that in today's context, multiple images and the innumerable faces of a fragmented culture seep into us, take root in the fertile soil of our natural desires, and fill us with sensations that flow through and take control of our feelings and decisions without our awareness (GC 35, d2, 26). This happens to be the modern approach of the evil spirit to take control of our life.

From the study of the first two chapters, we know that the action of the evil spirit hinders vocational discernment due to its temptations and temporary delights. True to this view, in the midst of today's digital world, where we have immediate access to entertainment and multiple worldly images and programs that give us instant gratification, the image of God, the spiritual programs and the topic of vocation are neglected. In spite of the changing context, if Christ does not have an important place in the life of people, vocational discernment too does not have a place in the decision-making process. Thus, vocational discernment is losing its meaning. Therefore, as the decree says, we have the responsibility to proclaim one image, Jesus Christ, the true image of God and true image of humanity, who, when we contemplate him, becomes

flesh in us, healing our inner brokenness and making us whole as persons, as communities, and as an apostolic body dedicated to Christ's mission (GC 35, d2, 26).

Vocational discernment involves the experience of God. It also invites us to have a personal conversion from those aspects that hinder our discernment. According to GC 36, Ignatian spirituality is the special gift that the Society of Jesus can offer to the Church to facilitate the experience of God and to help in personal and communal conversion (GC 36, d1, 23). This indicates that Ignatian spirituality has relevance in vocational discernment in this contemporary world. The GC also makes a special mention of Pope Francis while describing the role of discernment and its importance. It says, «Pope Francis constantly affirms that discernment should play a special role in the family, among youth, in vocation promotion, and in the formation of clergy. Christian life is more and more personalized through discernment» (GC 36, d1, 23). This statement underlines that the ambience of discernment is integral to Christian life.

In the dialogue of Pope Francis with the Jesuits gathered in the 36th General Congregation, he does not seem to be worried about a decline in vocation. He believes that vocations exist<sup>318</sup>. True to his words, if God has a plan for all and if vocation is the divine initiative, which we have discussed in the first chapter, we should not be worried about vocation. He says that we must know how to propose the vocations and how to attend to them<sup>319</sup>. We need to be worried about vocation promotion, not the vocations. The problem lies in the lack of commitment to vocational promotion.

Pope Francis further says that if the priest is always in a hurry with thousands of administrative works and if we do not call upon laity in vocational discernment, we will not have vocations<sup>320</sup>. These words focus on the responsibility of the Church in general and priests, religious and lay people in particular in the vocational discernment of young people today. A special mention of the laity indicates that everyone in the Church takes part in the process of vocational discernment. It focuses on the role of family and teachers in vocational discernment. We will discuss this later in this chapter.

In the words of Pope Francis, it is clear that the Church has to give time to the youth and listen to them. To make this possible, one has to be patient and creative in giving missionary

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<sup>318</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, "Address to the delegates of GC 36", in *ARSI XXVI (Romae: Apud Curian Praepositi Generalis, 2017)*, 287.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 287.

opportunities and catechetical and social experiences to discern the vocation<sup>321</sup>. These words in particular communicate that vocational discernment has to be the way of proceeding in the Church. Each one has the right to be guided, to know what God wants from them and to know to what state of life God calls them. Therefore, the promotion of vocation today has to be the promotion of vocational discernment, which authenticates the plan of God for each one. The vocational discernment in the Spiritual Exercises that we have discussed in the second chapter is truly a great contribution from the Society of Jesus to Church in this regard.

### **3.2. Vocational discernment in the writing of Pedro Arrupe and Peter Hans Kolvenbach, the contemporary Generals of the Society of Jesus**

#### **3.2.1. Pedro Arrupe**

The words of Pedro Arrupe regarding the importance of vocation take us back to the theology of vocation. Sidelining the view of the numerical decline of vocation, he touches on the core of our faith, which communicates vocation as the revelation of God, who calls a person to enter communion with Him<sup>322</sup>. He also stresses God's authorship in vocation, which we have discussed in the first chapter.

He raises the issue of responses to the call of God rather than deficiency in God's calling. External factors that are not favourable to responding to the call of God are the contemporary issues regarding discernment of vocation. Without excluding the errors and abuses in the Church and the responsibility of formators in pushing the importance of each one's vocation, he points out that family crises, the rise of lay apostolates and ministries that are not sufficiently renewed, neglect of prayer, a secularist attitude and professionalism are the causes of lack of vocations<sup>323</sup>. In other words, there is a lack of a good environment to enhance vocations. An ambience of exemplary life and a Christian faith environment may encourage vocational discernment and allow an authentic response to the call of God. Therefore, he stresses some external elements that encourage vocational discernment. They are briefly described as follows:

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<sup>321</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>322</sup> Cf. Pedro Arrupe, *La identidad del Jesuita en nuestros tiempos* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1981), 320.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Manuel Alcalá, "Pedro Arrupe y la vida religiosa en la Compañía de Jesús", *Manresa* 73 (2001): 260.

### 3.2.1.1. Visible image of the charism

Pedro Arrupe says that the image of the Society of Jesus is unattractive to young people who want to give their life for Christ<sup>324</sup>. Then the questions that arise are: What is our image today? Are we true to the image of the origin of the Society of Jesus? Are we far from the original charism of the Society of Jesus?

After Vatican II, from time to time, we are reminded of going back to the roots of our charism. Pope Paul VI asked the three questions while addressing the Jesuits during GC 32: «Where do you come from? Who are you? Where are you going? »<sup>325</sup>. These questions were posed as a reminder for the Jesuits not to lose the original image of the Society of Jesus in the decision-making of the apostolate and in the way of proceeding.

In the midst of this introspection, Arrupe stresses the “being” of each Jesuit when it concerns the general image of the Society of Jesus. A mere external and shallow appearance does not give a clean image of the Society. He says that the faithful and accurate appearance of real content is called the true image<sup>326</sup>. The real content of the Society of Jesus lies in the profound spiritual experience of St Ignatius, to which each Jesuit is called to be faithful.

This faithfulness cannot be visible in the Society if a Jesuit has not responded to the call of God with indifference and with the right intention, which is stressed in the second chapter. This makes us understand that to be a true image of the Society of Jesus, the vocation of each Jesuit must have been received from God (as in the vocational narratives in the Bible) through a sincere vocational discernment in accordance with the Spiritual Exercises.

Secondly, Arrupe focuses on the openness to the action of the Holy Spirit in the changing circumstances of our time and the needs of the people<sup>327</sup>. This is to make the image of the Society relevant to the present circumstances. The response of the Society to the current needs of the people makes the Society a discerning body. This makes vocational discernment relevant to the present situation. Our vocational discernment should follow according to the call of God and the context in which God calls. Vocational discernment is not restricted to the question of

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<sup>324</sup> Cf. Pedro Arrupe, 320.

<sup>325</sup> John W. Pedberg, ed., Documents of the 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> General Congregations of the Society of Jesus (Saint Luis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), 521.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. Pedro Arrupe, 321.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 321.

whether God calls us or not but rather focuses on why God calls us. What is the need today, according to God?

As we have seen in the first chapter, the call of God followed a same pattern and a same structure. But the mission was different for Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah, Mary, disciples and Paul. Holding on to the original charism of the Society of Jesus, our authentic vocation becomes visible in the daily circumstances of life. This is the contextual image of the Society, which creates an ambience for people who want to discern their vocation.

Thirdly, in the words of Pedro Arrupe, the image of the Society of Jesus regarding the apostolic renewal today cannot be a pleasing or mere attractive artificial change. The demands of our spirituality and our apostolic mission cannot be hidden. Excessive secularized life, inertia and spiritual and apostolic routines hide the true image of the Society of Jesus<sup>328</sup>. This attitude and way of living do not seem to be attractive for the youth of today to have reliance on vocational discernment.

Therefore, based on the thought of Arrupe, vocational discernment needs examples of vocations that are attracted by the spiritual life, real and not fictitious, creative in apostolate, valid for the Church and express spiritual and apostolic value, which are testimony for the youth today<sup>329</sup>. In this way, an ambience of vocation has to be such that a person must trust the vocational discernment by seeing the spirit, apostolic enthusiasm, personal conduct and testimony of life of those who have already done it.

### **3.2.1.2. Mutual communication and contact**

To enthuse vocational discernment among the young people today, there is a need for frequent contact with the youth, where we communicate the importance of vocational discernment in life. The various apostolates, such as education, pastoral and social are platforms to maintain contact with the youth. More specifically, the youth ministry itself is a direct access to talk to them about God's will for them. This contact can create an environment that encourages vocational discernment. Arrupe says that all those who are in contact with the youth, both in schools and in other works, overcoming the gap that may exist between generations or between teachers and students, must try to establish a deep personal contact with the young people,

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<sup>328</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>329</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 321.



engage in private conversations, especially through summer camps and thus share our joyful image, which encourages discernment<sup>330</sup>.

### 3.2.2. Peter Hans Kolvenbach

Peter Hans Kolvenbach, in his letter about vocation promotion, stresses God's initiative in the call. It indicates that the original theology about vocation, which we have discussed in the first chapter, is the backbone of any discussion about vocation. He says that it is not up to us to decide the number of candidates that the Lord wants to send to the novitiates. Vocation is the mystery of divine grace<sup>331</sup>. This implies the role of vocational discernment in vocation promotion. We discern God's will for our life. Thus, God's will and vocational discernment to respond to the call of God determine the number of candidates for the Society of Jesus or any congregation.

Secondly, Kolvenbach does not fail to mention the importance of vocational accompaniment in his above-mentioned letter. He uses the term "discovery" to denote seeking and finding the will of God<sup>332</sup>. The discovery takes place through vocational discernment, which we have already discussed in the second chapter. Therefore, when Kolvenbach writes about the need of those men of the Society of Jesus who will help the young people in their encounter with Christ and in the discovery of the call that they carry within them<sup>333</sup>, he speaks about creating a space for vocational discernment with qualitative direction and accompaniment.

Just like Arrupe, who speaks about maintaining the image of the Society of Jesus when young people want to dedicate their life for Christ, Kolvenbach too underlines the picture of the Society of Jesus that attracts youth. He wants the Society that is represented by authentic prayer, a simple and welcoming community and service to the poor<sup>334</sup>. When the Jesuits are men of prayer, they reduce their distance from the youth by being welcoming religious and devote their life selflessly to the service of others at any ministry. They create an ambience where vocational discernment has a scope.

He also points out the primacy of God's calling. He says that it is God who sends the vocation to the Society of Jesus. We can receive it by asking for it in prayer<sup>335</sup>. Asking God for His will

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<sup>330</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>331</sup> Cf. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "Sobre la promoción de vocaciones", in *Selección de escritos del P. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach* (Madrid: Provincia de España de la Compañía de Jesús, 1983-1990), 37.

<sup>332</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>333</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 38.

in prayer strengthens the meaning of vocational discernment. Vocational discernment keeps God at the core of the search. When we find God in prayer, we build a sense of indifference. God becomes the ultimate end that we follow. Accordingly, our decisions are based on what God wants from us. That is the speciality of vocational discernment.

One of the important aspects that Kolvenbach mentions in his letter is the role of Spiritual Exercises in vocational discernment. He says that we need to help the youth discern God's will for them through an election retreat<sup>336</sup>. He also says that accompaniment to those who show interest in the Society is an integral part of promoting the vocation. This accompaniment is to help them in their discernment<sup>337</sup>. Both Spiritual Exercises and accompaniment go hand in hand. When both are handled together, youth will receive a profound direction in their life.

The importance of information in vocational discernment is also part of Kolvenbach's thoughts. Just like Ignatius looked for information when he initially thought of joining the Carthusians monks, information becomes a necessary aspect of vocational discernment. Kolvenbach stresses modern means to spread the service of the Society of Jesus. He says that the photographs, publications and brochures could help in vocation promotion. Ultimately, they become a source of information for those who discern the vocation.

### **3.3. Basic elements that are intrinsic to vocational discernment**

#### **3.3.1. An ambience that nurtures vocational discernment**

An ambience of silence and serenity amidst the noise of this world cannot be sidelined in vocational discernment. The biblical vocational narratives agree with this and it is still relevant today. The silent interventions of God in the life of Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Samuel, Mary, etc. are clear examples in the Bible that prove the value of silence and serenity. Moses, who lived in the noise of Egypt and killed an Egyptian, goes in search of silence, where he can examine what had happened to him. He chooses a secluded place far from the cruel and hate-filled ambience of Egypt, where he has hardly encountered God. In the new land of Median, he encounters a new ambience, which helps him to encounter God and thus make his vocational discernment. Similarly, we have examples of Mary, Jeremiah, etc. in the Old Testament, which we have discussed in the first chapter. As we have dealt in the second chapter, Ignatius too discovered his vocation in solitude during his recuperation in Loyola. Solitude, silence and an

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<sup>336</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>337</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 39.

ambience of personal prayer are the means of encountering God today. They touch our deepest consolations, through which God calls us.

The Eucharist, Spiritual activities, listening to vocational testimony, reading spiritual books, etc. create in a person a spiritual movement that gives rise to thoughts and feelings of inclination towards God. They also become part of the process of prayer. Just like the thoughts and feelings that sprouted in the depths of Ignatius and gave rise to spiritual motions while reading *Vita Christi* and *Flos Sanctorum* in Loyola, external ambience and spiritual space to create a desire for vocational discernment are relevant in the world of glamour, consumerism and restlessness.

Why is a special importance given to silence and solitude today? In today's world of multilayered and multi-dimensional culture, both adults and young people are engaged in multiple activities at the same time. In this globalized, digitalized and interconnected world, electronic devices always accompany us. Amidst the various effects that they entail, the spaces of silence to make internal journeys and reflect seem to fade<sup>338</sup>. This disconnects the person from self-reflection and the necessary examination of life. At the same time, due to the lack of silence, there is no space for thoughts. An individual prefers to do rather than to think, even if what he/she does is unpleasant and not appealing<sup>339</sup>. When there is no scope for thoughts, there is no scope for spiritual motion. It is explained by José Garcia De Castro, who says that the motions consist mainly of thoughts (cf. Au 7.8.10.14.17.20.24.28...; Ex33-36.332-334.347), although we have to keep in mind that thought in Ignatius is a term broader than the strictly rational one that consists of the elaboration of ideas; thoughts include imaginations, fantasies, or the updated contents of memory<sup>340</sup>.

In the midst of the deprivation of thoughts and consequently the motions in the noisy and distracted world of today, a possible outcome is dryness and discontent itself. Just like Ignatius underwent dryness after an initial feeling of delight while thinking about the things of the world in Loyola (Au 8), a continuous delightful life gradually leaves a person shallow. Enric Puiggròs says that in this age of doing many things at the same time, which does not allow us to delve into any of them, certain discontent arises from the awareness of feeling trapped in this kind of

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<sup>338</sup> Cf. María Mata Correas-Elisa Pérez Avellán, "Discernimiento para la elección de la vida consagrada: Aportación de la psicología vocacional y la espiritualidad Ignaciana", *Manresa* 95 (2023): 331.

<sup>339</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>340</sup> Cf. José García de Castro, "Moción", in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1265.

wheel of stimuli<sup>341</sup>. This basic awareness creates a need for silence, serenity and the importance of getting in touch with oneself. This positive attitude towards silence and solitude can create an ambience of vocational discernment.

Further, to create this Christian and spiritual ambience of vocational discernment, especially among the youth who are at the age of thinking about their future, we need to provide materials on Christian experience in a creative way in this technological and digital world. The use of social media to share faith testimony and spiritual experiences of some who are touched by Christ provides a space for reflection and spiritual movements among the youth. Videos on biblical cartoons for the children and the life of Christ and the lives of saints for the youth give them spiritual food in this materialistic world.

Today, a person grows up in family, in places of education, training and work and in the ecclesiastical circle or religious places. All of these individually have a contribution to make in creating an ambience that enthuses and sustains vocational discernment. In the context of globalization and cultural change, the family is still a prominent reference point in the process of the integral development of the human person<sup>342</sup>. Family shapes the personality of young people, who learn basic values of faith, relationships, communication, etc. from their parents and elders. «The family is the first school of human values, where we learn the wise use of freedom»<sup>343</sup>.

But, in this digital world, the youth are prone to divert their attention from the family and be content with the virtual relationship, which is delightful and entertaining. Pope Francis says, «For many people, immersion in the virtual world has brought about a kind of “digital migration”, involving withdrawal from their families and their cultural and religious values, and entrance into a world of loneliness and of self-invention, with the result that they feel rootless even while remaining physically in one place»<sup>344</sup>.

Secondly, the intergenerational conflict creates a gap between the elders and the youth in the family. In this situation, the psychological link between the parents and children is lost. An ambience of domestic church becomes far from the reality in such families. Pope Francis says

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<sup>341</sup> Cf. Puiggrós, “Apropiarse de la vida”, 348.

<sup>342</sup> Cf. XV Ordinary General Assembly- Young People- The Faith And Vocational Discernment, Synod Of Bishops, Consulted On 12 March 2024, [Instrumentum Laboris - XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment" \[3-28 October 2018\] \(vatican.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/content/secretariat-synod/en/2018/10/31-instrumentum-laboris-xv-og-2018-10-31.html)., n. 11.

<sup>343</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia: Joy of Love* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2016), n. 274.

<sup>344</sup> Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis, Consulted on 05 May 2024, [Exhttps://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html), n. 90.

that some youth find family traditions oppressive and in some parts of the world, more than generational conflict, there is mutual estrangement. The adults fail to transmit the basic values of life to the young people<sup>345</sup>. Thus, both digital addiction and the failure of the adult in the family to transmit the faith and the spiritual tradition leave the youth unattended in their journey of seeking and finding the will of God. If vocational discernment has to be part of the journey of every Christian, the family life has to be enhanced and the spiritual life in the family has to be maintained. The spiritual conversation and holistic growth may allow space for vocational discernment in the family.

Apart from the family, educational institutions also have the advantage of communicating the importance of vocational discernment along with formal education and human development. In the educational institutions of many countries, where students belong to different religions, it is not possible to make vocational discernment part of the program. But during the time allotted for faith education, the topic of vocational discernment can be dealt with. The various associations specifically meant for Catholic youth can be a platform to discern their vocation.

Pope Francis stresses the importance of creating a friendly setting in the institutions and the youth centres, where young people can share not only music, games, sports, etc. but also reflection and prayer. The schools can also become privileged places for personal and human development<sup>346</sup>. All these privileges in educational institutions provide an opportunity for sharing the experience of God and how God intervenes in each person's life. This is a spiritual ambience that makes vocational discernment part of life.

When the ambience is totally conducive for a person to make vocational discernment, as mentioned above, care must be taken that there is no excessive praise and reverence for one state of life compared to the other. Even though, from the point of view of biblical narratives, we know that priesthood is God's special election for his mission, we cannot excessively keep this state of life in the pedestrian at the cost of undervaluing the importance of discerned married life. One must be cautious with this point, since in a context where being religious is praised, what motivates one may not be an evangelical motive but rather an excessive and selfish recognition. At the same time, a total lack of support, especially from family, friends

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<sup>345</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 80.

<sup>346</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 218-223.

and relatives, by communicating the strictness of priesthood and religious life, a lack of individuality, etc. can also hinder an authentic discernment of a person<sup>347</sup>.

Based on the above points, we realize that ambience is a delicate aspect that can, on the one hand, encourage vocational discernment and on the other, discourage it. At the same time, regarding a state of life, it can, on the one hand, excessively exaggerate a state of life and, on the other, communicate negative information about it. Therefore, it is conducive and important to have a balanced and indifferent ambience that helps a person make an authentic vocational discernment.

### **3.3.2. To know God and to have personal experience of God**

Enric Puiggròs says that many times there are people who may be very enthusiastic in deciding a state of life but do not have a theological up-to-date experience of Jesus<sup>348</sup>. A Christian spiritual ambience with prayers and devotions is not sufficient for a person to discern his/her call. He/she needs to have a basic knowledge of who God is. What is his/her mission? Why does He call some people, particularly to continue His mission? What is the role of the Church? etc. In other words, a discerning person must have a basic catechism of Christian faith and morals and the fundamental meaning of the doctrine of the Church<sup>349</sup>. Since a person is invited to respond to the call of God through faith and within the structure of the Church, the conviction of Christian faith and the basic knowledge of morals and the doctrine of the Church is necessary. Without it, one is not free to pursue vocational discernment.

Secondly, since discernment is a grace<sup>350</sup>, it goes beyond information about our God. Knowledge about God must simultaneously initiate a personal experience of God. A discerning person is considered to have a close friendship with God in prayer through faith. According to Franz Meures, as far as vocational discernment is concerned, the first object of our attention is God and his revelation. We are attracted to it when we listen to the Gospel, when we pray, etc. When this relationship with God is established, then the focus shifts to inner movements such as thoughts, feelings, aspirations, etc, through which I discover the call of God<sup>351</sup>. His words

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<sup>347</sup> Cf. Correas- Avellán, “Discernimiento para la elección de la vida consagrada”, 335.

<sup>348</sup> Cf. Puiggròs, “Apropiarse de la vida”, 355.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. Luis M. García Domínguez, *El libro del discípulo* (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2011), 92.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exultate: On Call to Holiness in Today's World* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2018), n. 170.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. Franz Meures, “Dimensión Afectiva en el Discernir y Decidir”, *Revista de Espiritualidad Ignaciana* 39 (2008): 77.

convey a message that without an intimate relationship with God through prayer, we cannot enter into vocational discernment, which is discussed in detail in the second chapter.

How can a person grow in an intimate relationship with God? Along with the Church, where the Eucharist creates a bond between God and discerning person, family plays a significant role in vocational discernment. A person's spiritual life begins in the family. If a Christian family grows in faith, every member of the family will know Christ intimately. *Evangelii Gaudium* says that the family is a sacred place where parents pass on their life of faith to their children (EG, 66)<sup>352</sup>. When families deepen their faith, the door to vocational discernment opens. By faith, Abraham responded to the call of God. With faith, Mary said yes to the plan of God. Faith with deep conviction is ready to seek and find the will of God. Therefore, the ambience of faith in the family must lead a person to cultivate faith and be closely related to God in prayer. This cannot be restricted to fulfilling the traditional routine, but it is a platform to savour the presence of God in the daily activities of life.

The personal experience of God takes place in solitude and silence. We are aware of it from the first and second chapters. Pope Francis says,

«The Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways, at work, through others and at every moment. Yet we simply cannot do without the silence of prolonged prayer, which enables us better to perceive God's language, to interpret the real meaning of the inspirations we believe we have received, to calm our anxieties and to see the whole of our existence afresh in his own light»<sup>353</sup>.

Once the distance between God and the discerning person gets reduced in prayer, the latter starts loving God through faith and reverence. Then emerges an attitude of listening to the voice of God. When there is openness to listen, one is able to set aside one's own ideas and plans and discern the plan of God. As Pope Francis says, «If we are prepared to listen to God and the reality itself, we have the freedom to set aside our own partial or insufficient ideas and become truly open to accepting a call of God»<sup>354</sup>. This creates an attitude of indifference to the call of God and total surrender to the will of God as Abraham, Moses, Mary, St Ignatius, etc. did in their life.

This relationship with God also gives a person confidence that God is present in his/her life, offering all the support and company<sup>355</sup>. Simultaneously, the person feels the need to respond

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<sup>352</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2013), n. 66.

<sup>353</sup> Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exultate*, n. 171

<sup>354</sup> Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, n. 284.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. Domínguez, *El libro del discípulo*, 97.

to the will of God with total surrender. If a person responds with total freedom from attachment to the call of God to be a priest or religious, he/she generously follows the way of proceeding of a priest or religious of a particular congregation, to which he/she enters (This can be another subject for further study). If God calls the person to carry out His mission as a married person, he /she will willingly accept this mission of God. Be it a married or a celibate (priestly and religious) life, the decision takes place through vocational discernment. This has to be the way of proceeding in the Church. This is the way to respond to the will of God.

### **3.3.3. Marching towards a coherent life: Addressing integrity and consistency**

When it is a matter of integrity and consistency, I would like to focus on the need for health, human integrity and spiritual integrity to make a vocational discernment. Though temporary physical health issues do not affect choosing a state of life, they become a hindrance at the time of vocational discernment. St Ignatius was not in a position to discern what God wanted from him at the time of the treatment of his leg. During the time of recuperation, as he was able to read the books, he started having interior conversations, which led to his vocational discernment.

Physical health does matter in order to get in touch with the conscience and seek and find the will of God. If a person discovers after discernment that God wants him as a priest or a religious for his service, it has to be verified with his physical capacity or condition, which is part of vocational discernment. As there are certain impediments to married life, there are also certain impediments to religious or priestly life. Luis María García Domínguez says that one is called to be in sufficient physical health for the mission or vocation he wishes to undertake. ‘Sufficient health’ means normal health or, perhaps, some controllable illness that does not impede ordinary formation and the exercise of the future mission. Sufficient mental health is another necessary requirement for a vocation that will be subject to the stresses of all adult life and, in addition, to some added difficulties in carrying out the vocation and the mission<sup>356</sup>. It is particularly dealt with in the constitutions of each congregation. This can itself be another matter for discussion regarding vocational discernment in a particular congregation. But as mentioned above, when a person undergoes vocational discernment, he/she must see that he/she enjoys sufficient physical and mental health so as to make authentic vocational discernment.

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<sup>356</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 93.



Secondly, vocational discernment accompanies, human integrity, which calls for reflecting on personal strengths and those areas of failure and pain. Enric Puiggròs says that working on one's own personal autobiography or personal history will help to recall those moments of the past that have left a mark inside. Resolving the personal wounds before making a life decision is necessary<sup>357</sup>. Maturation in sexual and affective life also gives clarity about life decisions, whether married or celibate. According to Enric Puiggròs, the affective-sexual autobiography allows the person to examine his/her sexual maturity and to see whether he/she is suitable for married life or a celibate life<sup>358</sup>. If a person has a weakness in sexual life or is too immature to understand its purpose and value, he/she needs to spend sufficient time orienting himself/herself regarding this aspect and more importantly delay making the decisions about the state of life.

Thirdly, spiritual integrity along the path of vocational discernment must be such that the discerning person maintains God as the centre of life. Around this spirit of God centredness, he/she weaves his/her spiritual life. A life of faith maintains God as the centre of life. Just like the Roman centurion, who believed in the power of Jesus and in his own unworthiness (cf. Lk 7,6), the blind man who shouts despite the reproaches of the disciples (cf. Lk 18,39) and Zacchaeus, who welcoming the transforming words of Jesus into his heart (cf. Lk 19,8), the discerning person needs to cultivate, with faith, a maturity to welcome God's will in his/her life. Just like the above three biblical persons, a total surrender to God's will needs maturity in faith and coherent living of faith in Jesus<sup>359</sup>.

Consistency in faith and in the fear of God, which is expressed through inclination towards the Eucharist, prayer, devotions, etc. creates godliness in a person. Then the vocational discernment has a smooth sailing, where God is the author of life. If a person does not believe that the beatitudes that are said by Jesus should be applied in life, or if he/she does not believe that forgiveness is possible, then he/she is contrary to the Gospel<sup>360</sup>. When there is no consistency in following the teachings of the Bible, the vocational discernment becomes beyond reach. When there is faithfulness and consistency in trusting and following the words and deeds of Jesus, the Spiritual Exercises, which we have discussed in the second chapter, further help as a

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<sup>357</sup> Cf. Puiggròs, "Apropiarse de la vida", 354.

<sup>358</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>359</sup> Cf. Luis M. García Domínguez, *Discernir la llamada* (Maliaño: Sal Terrae, 2022), 190.

<sup>360</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 193.

tool in integrating spiritual elements and experiencing Christ, which are essential in vocational discernment.

### **3.3.4. Accompaniment in vocational discernment**

We have already discussed in the second chapter the role of accompaniment in the vocational discernment of Ignatius. We understand that the accompanying person is a privileged witness of God's saving and sanctifying passage through the life of each believer; his mission is to help to see and facilitate the encounter with God<sup>361</sup>. He/she does not interfere in the personal dialogue of a discerning person with God. He/she as a witness, does not become a judge of that dialogue. But the role of the witness is not negligible. Along with this role, how broadly can we understand the role of accompaniment in vocational discernment today?

Generally, an accompaniment to a person's vocational discernment is considered spiritual direction. It is obvious and important that the spiritual guides have a bigger role in directing the vocational discernment of a person. But the role of the other in vocational discernment cannot be restricted to a spiritual guide. In other words, accompaniment cannot be restricted only as a formal help to a discerning person but must be viewed from a broader perspective.

Since vocational discernment is intrinsic to Christian life, it takes into account the influence of the people with whom we grow in life. There are so many people who, directly or indirectly, provide support, help and guidance in the vocational discernment of a person. This takes place throughout the above elements: while growing in an ambience that nurtures vocational discernment, while having knowledge and personal experience of God and while marching towards a coherent life.

As Magdalena Araoz provided the books *Vita Christi* and *Flos Sanctorum* to Ignatius, her brother-in-law, to read during his recuperation, she became a help in Ignatius' vocational discernment. In the New Testament, Mary got support from Elizabeth through her words, «Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? » (Lk 1,43). Andrew guided Peter to go to Jesus (cf. Jn 1,40-42). Similarly, family members, who create a spiritual ambience for a person through family prayers, scripture reading, visiting the shrines, etc., become a first guide in the vocational discernment of a person.

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<sup>361</sup> Cf. Jesús Sastre, *El discernimiento vocacional* (Madrid: San Pablo, 1996), 47.

Secondly, the priests and the religious create another layer of support in creating an ambience of vocational discernment and becoming the guide. When a person listens to the word of God, the sermons and participates in the religious celebrations in the parish and in other holy places, he/she shapes a heart that looks for what God wants from him/her. The spiritual talk among friends, the fear of God, spiritual elements in the language of communication, gestures, moral talks and actions that flow from the commandments of God, create a feeling of godliness in a person. God becomes the centre of any words, greetings, actions, programs, decisions, etc. In this social guidance, a person orients himself/herself towards vocational discernment.

Apart from this general support and accompaniment, what makes a difference is the personal guidance in orienting a person's life in accordance with vocational discernment. In the Old Testament, when Samuel was not able to understand the voice of God, he sought the help of Eli (cf. 1 Sam 3,19-21). Ignatius received time-to-time guidance in Montserrat, Manresa and other stages of his life. This guidance has value in vocational discernment, especially while distinguishing the motions of consolations and desolations. Luis M. Garcia Domínguez says that the spiritual guide is freer than ourselves to distinguish the motions, as he/she is not affected by our passion nor deceived by our evil spirits. Discernment between two people helps much more to find the truth than a mere discernment closed in oneself and radically conditioned by the fact that the same person is the subject and the object of the analysis and decision; no one is a good judge in one's own cause<sup>362</sup>. Therefore, accompaniment is significant for the objective search for one's vocation.

When a person makes Spiritual Exercises with the view of vocational discernment and electing a state of life, the accompaniment plays a special function. The accompaniment takes place during the personal interview with the exercitant. There are certain guidelines that the director (person who guides or accompanies)<sup>363</sup> must follow to help the discerning person make a good election according to the will of God<sup>364</sup>.

1. The director should make sure that the exercitant has the natural capacity and proper disposition to do vocational discernment and make an election.

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<sup>362</sup> Cf. Domínguez, *El libro del discípulo*, 89.

<sup>363</sup> The words «director», «guide», or «the who accompanies» do not appear in the writings of Ignatius. These words are adaptation of what Ignatius used to call, «the one who gives Exercises»: Pascual Cebollada, «Ejercitador/a», in *DEI*, ed. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (Bilbao-Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 708.

<sup>364</sup> Two sources are used to describe these guidelines. They are: Domínguez, *La Entrevista en los Ejercicios Espirituales*, 219-234; Cebollada, «Ejercitador/a», 710-714.

2. The director should be a good listener. He must listen to the narration of the prayer experience of the exercitant diligently. He must focus more on certain aspects that are related to vocational discernment.
3. He/she must be in tune with the exercitant. This strengthens the trust and the exercitant feels free to share about what is happening during the prayer.
4. He/she should be able to perceive the internal motions of the exercitant through external gestures and mood.
5. As a reply to what the exercitant shares, the director must respond only with some words and without much reflection. He/she must allow the exercitant to further reflect on the motions and extract the conclusions<sup>365</sup>. He/she must allow the exercitant to make discernment by himself/herself.
6. He/she should help the exercitant name the consolations and desolations during the prayer and other times.
7. He/she must also convince the exercitant that when there are desolations, there is a possibility to fight against them.
8. He/she must help the exercitant perceive the insights and implications of them in the vocational discernment.
9. The director must avoid making the exercitant dependent on him/her, so that the exercitant discovers by himself/herself the will of God.
10. The director must avoid inclining towards one decision or the other. He/she allows the creator to work with the creature and the creature with the creator and Lord (SE 15).
11. He/she should not manipulate or desire to shape the decision of the exercitant.
12. If the exercitant does not make an election according to the discernment of the Spiritual Exercises and if the director strongly feels that the exercitant is not making a correct decision, the director can ask him/her to delay the decision and wait for the time to clearly know the will of God.

Today's youth find it difficult to face vocational questions<sup>366</sup>. There is a fear in the youth that the vocational promoters tend to push their decisions according to what they want. The vocation promoter's role is also that of a spiritual guide who only helps the youth discern their vocation with indifference. Vocation promoters also have the responsibility to encourage the youth to discern their vocation, provide an ambience that helps them to discern and give sufficient

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<sup>365</sup> Cf. *FNI*, 659.

<sup>366</sup> Cf. Domínguez, *El libro del discípulo*, 110.

information for discernment. Vocation promotion today is nothing less than the promotion of vocational discernment. It is the mission of God to help more and more people discover the will of God in their life. Vocational discernment should be the daily song of Christianity today.

## CONCLUSION

Vocational discernment has shown its profound presence in Ignatian Spirituality. It appears that the autobiography of St Ignatius of Loyola and the Spiritual Exercises are full of vocational discernment. The speciality of this discernment has a lot to do with interior dialogue, which has shaped the vocation of St Ignatius and of those who do the Spiritual Exercises with the objective of vocational discernment.

The first chapter on Biblical vocational narratives has unfolded the theology that surrounds vocational discernment. It has clarified the meaning of vocation, the intention of God's call and the role of vocation in the life of a Christian. At the same time, I have discovered the elements of vocational discernment in the Bible while studying the characteristics of vocation. Though there is no explicit method or information on vocational discernment in the Bible, the mode of calling and the way of responding to the call of God appear to be a discerned process of approaching the vocation. The attitude of the objection to the call of God shows signs of discernment and confirmation before election.

Since the Bible does not concentrate more on the interior dialogue, the thinking and feeling of each individual who is called, vocational discernment is not underlined in the Bible. But the words of responding to the call of God have, at the background, the thought process, which is redacted as open conversion with God or with the messenger of God. The dialogue of Moses, Jeremiah, Mother Mary, etc. while responding to the call of God has elements of vocational discernment. This shows that vocational discernment, though not concrete with methods and rules, has an implicit presence in the Bible. This becomes an exegetical and theological starting point to justify its importance in the Christian way of proceeding and to value the topic of vocational discernment in Ignatian spirituality.

The second chapter, which deals with the life of Ignatius of Loyola and the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises, has presented concretely the core of vocational discernment in Ignatian Spirituality. The life of Ignatius is a classic example of vocational discernment. A close study of the various stages of his life in a chronological manner has shown that vocational discernment is a slow and gradual process that is constantly in touch with interiority. It has also underlined certain elements such as thoughts, feelings (consolation and desolation), divine signs, information, external spiritual practices, spiritual accompaniment, etc. that are significant in vocational discernment. The life of Ignatius from the time of his conversion in Loyola engulfs him in a profound spiritual experience that helps him to decentre his ego and

open himself to the will of God with indifference. As he passes from one stage to another, he starts viewing everything from the sight of God. These aspects are incorporated into the first part of the chapter. The first part has also incorporated the rules of discernment in the Spiritual Exercises into the vocational discernment of Ignatius.

The second part of the second chapter has dealt with in detail the vocational discernment in the SE. The study has shown that the SE as a whole is rich in vocational discernment. All four weeks lead a person to make a good decision regarding the state of life. The first week, which focuses on the desolations for one's sins and the consolations due to the mercy of God, creates an attitude of humility in a discerning person. The egocentric motivations are changed to a new motivation of deep personal love for Christ. This makes him/her more determined to serve God. God's infinite mercy disposes a person to open himself/herself to the mystery of God.

Though all the exercises of the second week prepare a person to make an election, the exercises that are prelude to the election, such as The Contemplation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Two Standards, Three Classes of Person and Three Degrees of Humility are dealt with in detail. They have unfolded certain factors that are prerequisites to the election. Attentive listening and inner freedom to respond to the call of God, being aware of the evil spirit that presents self-sufficiency against the conviction of poverty and humility like that of Christ, purifying the affection for things and being indifferent in life lead a person to a crucial stage of election. A close study on election has shown how all three times of election are supportive and inter-related to one another and how they integrate both feelings and reason in electing a state of life.

The third chapter has centred around contemporary thoughts on vocational discernment in the General Congregations and in the writings of Pedro Arrupe and Peter Hans Kolvenbach, the recent Generals of the Society of Jesus. The General Congregations 34, 35 and 36 deal with the topic of vocation and vocational discernment to such an extent that they stress more on maintaining the image of the Society of Jesus and creating an ambience for the youth to discern their vocation. Though the word vocational discernment does not appear in any of the documents, the argument is in line with vocational discernment. The external elements, such as the focus on the image of Christ amid the external worldly images, the knowledge of the Bible and of saints, the experience of God and the availability of the Church in listening to the youth, are necessary for vocational discernment. They are dealt with in the documents of the General Congregations.

Pedro Arrupe, along with the focus on the spiritual image of the Society of Jesus and constant communication with the youth, stresses adapting vocational discernment to the daily circumstances of life, during which each one discerns the vocation according to what God wants from them today. Kolvenbach, on the other hand, mentions qualitative direction and accompaniment, which need to go hand in hand with the Spiritual Exercises.

At the end of this chapter, based on the above documents and the writings of Pope Francis, I have dealt with the role of family, institutions and the Church in creating an ambience of discernment, described briefly the importance of knowledge of Christian faith and doctrine and underlined personal experience of God and affective maturity that integrates a person to make a discerned decision. I have also discovered from the above-mentioned documents and from contemporary writings that the accompaniment is not restricted to formal guidance by the spiritual director. The people with whom we grow in life, such as family members, teachers, priests and religious, to a large extent, accompany a person towards vocational discernment. Ultimately, the accompaniment, formal or informal, has the potential to make a person listen to the voice of God and direct his/her life to seek and find the will of God.

What is the newness that stands out in this paper? Compared to the richness of vocational discernment in Ignatian Spirituality, my contribution to this topic is very minimal. It has been a study of re-reading the life of Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises from the point of view of vocational discernment. But nevertheless, I have attempted to extract the elements of vocational discernment in the Bible by interacting and relating one vocational narrative with another and by studying the way in which each one is specifically called for the mission of God. While reading the life of Ignatius, I have focused on most of the actions of Ignatius, which have become part of his vocational discernment. In the course of my study on the different exercises of the Spiritual Exercises, especially those that are preludes to the election, I have tried to explain them with newness. In the Two Standards, I have explained the action of the evil spirit by comparing it to a virus in the cell and I have divided the three classes of person based on their similarities, semi-similarities and dissimilarities between them. While explaining the role of election in vocational discernment, I have taken a stand with the thoughts of some authors while denying the thoughts of others. Finally, from the study of contemporary documents, I have extracted some external elements of vocational discernment that are relevant today.



My study on vocational discernment in Ignatian Spirituality, leaves open many related topics, which could be the starting point for further study. While going through the life of Ignatius of Loyola in view of his vocational discernment, I have found that his letters to his companions and to those whom he helped in their spiritual life could be a further source for studying vocational discernment. There is also a scope for elaborating on the individual vocational discernment of each of the first companions of Ignatius, in spite of their common vision and common mission. Psycho-spiritual integration, which has a profound impact on the election, can be another topic of investigation in relation to vocational discernment. My paper restricts vocational discernment to any state of life. But the vocational discernment does not stop there. Each one continues to discern the vocation within a state of life that he/she has elected. Further discernment in married life in accordance with the canon law or in a particular congregation in accordance with the constitutions expands this topic of vocational discernment further.

Vocational discernment is the need of the hour today since the young are immersed in the culture of zapping. We can navigate simultaneously on two or more screens and interact at the same time with two or three virtual scenarios. Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend.<sup>367</sup> Amidst all the simultaneous preoccupations, where life seems to be busy with multiple activities and the mind seems to focus on multiple things at a time, personal vocation and vocational discernment, which need patience, solitude, silence, concentration, seem to lose ground. Therefore, despite the fact that the world is setting up the issues for discussion, we need to stand our ground in defending the value and the need for vocational discernment.

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<sup>367</sup> Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exultate*, n. 167.

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