

# DISCERNMENT

Oblates of the  
Sisters of the Good  
Samaritan of the  
Order of St Benedict



# DISCERNMENT

The Rule of Benedict offers ancient wisdom and tradition for contemporary spirituality



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What actually is discernment?

So many people talk about choosing God's will and not your own, or deciding if one has a vocation, meaning a religious vocation. You may be asking "How do I know if I should be an Oblate or not?"

Let's look at the origin of the word

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It comes from late 14c., from Old French discernier (13c.)

"distinguish (between), separate" (by sifting),

and directly from Latin discernere "to separate, set apart, divide, distribute; distinguish, perceive"



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Within our Good Samaritan Tradition discernment is not just something that is done now and again, it is a way of life

It is about

- growing in awareness of God in all aspects of life
- learning to recognise God at work in others and in myself
- growing in sensitivity to the inner movements of my own heart

As Benedict puts it, “Listen with the ear of your heart” (RB Prologue)

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What about discerning a call to Oblate Life?

To discern between good and bad is not so difficult

However to discern how God might be calling is a taking everything to a very different level. It is discerning between good and good and then making a choice

Consider,

- To hear God, implies that I have some sort of relationship with God
- The stronger that relationship the easier it is to 'hear'



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As Pope Francis describes it, a vocation always begins with Christ, who comes in love to an individual person, leading her/him to search for a path in life by which to respond to that love.



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In prayerful dialogue with Christ, this person then examines his/her personal circumstances, in order to find the path of life in which s/he can make the best gift of self in love





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Discernment of Oblate Life poses the following questions

1. Am I truly willing to encounter God and allow that encounter to transform me?
  - Can I like Moses stand on Holy ground before God and ask the question: Who are you? And then listen to the answer?



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## 2. Am I willing to encounter my real self?

- As has been said before discernment “is not a spiritual treasure hunt. It is less about looking out and more about **listening** within”
- It implies a willingness to start tuning out the distractions ... to begin to have a disciplined prayer life

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And the third question

Am I willing to deeply encounter others as they are and not as I would like them to be

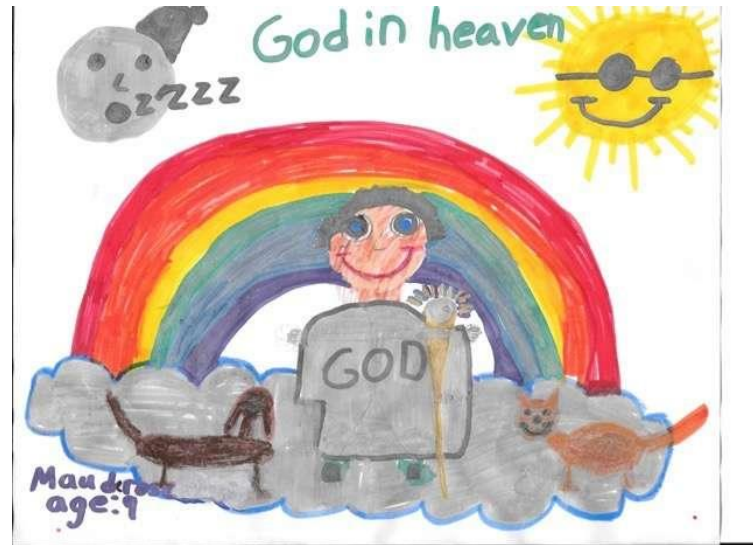
- Am I able to just let another person be, even when their belief system is very different from my own?
- Am I willing to look beyond externals to see the person inside?



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## What can stop me hearing God

- false or immature understanding of God



- false understanding of self



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Discernment with a Good Samaritan Benedictine understanding comes from the inheritance of the very early Benedictines.

They accepted and developed the spiritual practice of desert monasticism: seeking guidance from a spiritual elder for help in discernment.

The principle behind this practice was very simple. We cannot have a clear view into our own hearts. Spiritual vision is often clouded by unresolved and conflicting desires.

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- ◉ Our vision is especially murky when our lives are in question.
- ◉ Our thoughts, our questions, our ‘drives’ need to be brought into the light where they can be seen for what they are.
- ◉ Yet our internal resistances of denial and even shame collude with our need of approval.
- ◉ This means that important issues end up cycling endlessly in our heart.

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How true this is when a person is trying to respond to God's call.

Because how do I really know if this is God?

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We might be thinking thoughts such as

Maybe it is just my imagination.

Why would God call me anyhow? I know that I am not the best person.

I know my deep inner thoughts and longings and at times such thoughts do not seem to fit with being a making a public Oblation about how I live life  
And when I pray about it, at times it seems to get clearer and then it is all dark again and sometimes there is just nothing.



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And yet ....

There is something that seems to be urging me, that is beyond even my thoughts and feelings

It is only with the compassionate companionship, of what Benedict refers to as a 'wise elder' can, what can be an inner turmoil, be brought to resolution and peace and finally to a decision

# DISCERNMENT

Clay, soft, pliable

to use as you will, to mould,  
to form an image in your likeness.

Power within

to use for you  
clay sprung into life  
Breathed upon by God

Almighty

Breathe now!

In your Spirit be the life

That glows, grows and burns within,

The power within, to come without

To be for you - clay soft and pliable

