

DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS: SECOND WEEK RULES EXAMPLES

A Review of the First Set of Rules:

George: “This morning in the chapel, prayer was difficult. In spite of so many and fervent appeals to Christ’s love there was no feeling in me of response from the Beloved. I then turned to Our Blessed Lady and said something like this – “Please ask your Son to grant me the grace to love Him more and more.... This was said only a very few minutes before the end of the half hour which had been arid. Suddenly I felt a very sweet touch which warmed my whole being and stirred me to feelings of deep and moving gratitude to the Beloved and to his Mother.”

William Kernan, *My Road to Certainty*: “I looked out of the train window to the California countryside which I was rapidly leaving behind me – the orange groves shimmering in the light of the late afternoon sun the little bungalows which appeared here and there for a moment and then were gone as the train sped on, and the mountains far out on the horizon.... An upsurge of gratitude swept through me and warmed my heart, and I thanked God for His Providence and goodness that had kept me all the days of my life and which, I was sure, would keep me safe forever. I could go on thinking of tomorrow in terms of today. Something would always be the same in every tomorrow; something would be certain – God.”

Married man, 38 years old: I had had a serious knee surgery five months earlier, and things had been slowly getting better with my knee. Recently, however, it seemed worse. This day, I saw the doctor and returned discouraged by his report: If my knee did not improve, how would I ever do my work for the years to come? How would I meet my family’s needs? I had felt tired already on rising, but, when I got back from the doctor’s, I felt stripped of all energy. In the evening, I usually pray Evening Prayer. This day, I felt so tired and discouraged that I never said it. When I tried to pray at the end of the day, the same thing happened: I was tired, discouraged, and afraid, and it was hard to pray. Somehow, God seemed very far away, and I felt alone. I wound up spending time on the smartphone that I didn’t really want to spend.

I slept poorly that night, and rose with a sense that it would be hard to pray at all this new day. The fear and discouragement were still there. I asked the Lord to help me get through this, and to help me live the day well. As usual, I went to Mass before work. Mass was helpful; the readings spoke to me: they told of God’s care for his people in distress: “In you the orphan finds compassion,” “I will love them freely” (Hos. 14:2-10); “I relieved his shoulder from the burden” (Ps 81), and of the great commandment to love God with all our heart (Mk 12: 28-34).

After Mass, overcoming some initial resistance, I said the Rosary on the way to work, and that too lifted my heart. In the late morning, I had a meeting with a client who was grateful for the help I had given him. That was an uplifting time, and afterward, I was grateful and thanked God for it.

More than I like, I find that in times like the day before, I feel stripped of all my spiritual energy. I wish this didn’t just keep happening.

The Second Set of Rules:

St. Ignatius, *Autobiography*: Manresa: In addition to his seven hours of prayer, he occupied himself with helping some souls who came to seek him in regard to spiritual things, and all the rest of the day he dedicated to thinking about the things of God that he had meditated or read that day. But when he went to rest, many times there came to him great illuminations and great spiritual consolations which caused him to lose much of the time that he had set aside for sleep, and that was not much; considering this several times, he reflected that he had decided to devote much time to dealing with God, and afterward all the rest of the day as well; and consequently he began to doubt whether those illuminations came from the good spirit, and he concluded that it would be better to reject them and to sleep during the time determined, and this he did.

Barcelona: “Returning to Barcelona he began his studies with great diligence. But there was one thing that stood very much in his way, and that is that when he began to learn by heart, as has to be done in the beginning of grammar, he received new light on spiritual things and new delights. So strong were these delights that he could memorize nothing, nor could he get rid of them however much he tried. Thinking this over at various times, he said to himself: ‘Even when I go to prayer or attend Mass these lights do not come to me so vividly.’ Thus, step by step he came to recognize that it was a temptation.”

The Title to the Second Week Rules (*SpirEx*, 328)

- Rules for the same effect
- With greater discernment of spirits
- For persons in the Second-Week spiritual situation

(**Title to the First Set of Rules:** Rules for *becoming aware* and *understanding* to some extent the different movements which are caused in the soul, the *good*, to *receive them*, and the *bad* to *reject them*. And these rules are more proper for the first week.)

***Spiritual Exercises*, Annotations 6-10: A “Directory” for Using the Two Sets of Rules for the Discernment of Spirits:**

Sixth Annotation. The sixth. When the one who gives the exercises perceives that the one making the exercises is not receiving spiritual movements in his soul, such as consolations or desolations, and that he is not agitated by various spirits, he should ply him with questions about the exercises, whether he is doing them at their appointed times, and how he does them; in the same way, regarding the additions, whether he is diligent in observing them, asking in detail

about each of these things. Consolation and desolation are spoken of in nos. 316-324, and the additions in nos. 73-90.

Seventh Annotation. The seventh: If the one who gives the exercises sees that the one receiving them is desolate and tempted, he should not be hard or severe with him but gentle and kind, giving him courage and strength for the future, revealing to him the wiles of the enemy of human nature, and getting him to prepare and dispose himself for the coming consolation.

Eighth Annotation. The eighth: The one who gives the exercises, according to the need that he perceives in the one who receives them, with regard to the desolations and wiles of the enemy, and also the consolations, may explain to him the rules of the first and second weeks, which are for recognizing different spirits, nos. 313-327, and 328-336.

Ninth Annotation. The ninth is to note that, when the person who is making the exercises is in the exercises of the first week, if he is a person who is not versed in spiritual things, and if he is tempted grossly and openly, as for example by presenting obstacles to going forward in the service of God our Lord, such as labors, shame, and fear for the honor of the world, etc.; the one who gives the exercises should not explain to him the rules about different spirits for the second week, because as much as those for the first week will help him, those for the second week will harm him, as being matter too subtle and elevated for him to understand.

Tenth Annotation. The tenth: When the one who gives the exercises perceives that the one who receives them is assaulted and tempted under the appearance of good, then it is proper to explain to him the rules for the second week already mentioned. For the enemy of human nature commonly tempts more under the appearance of good when the person is exercising himself in the illuminative life, which corresponds to the exercises of the second week, and not so much in the purgative life, which corresponds to the exercises of the first week.

Patricia, First Experience: Patricia's life of faith before her college years consisted of family participation in Sunday Mass and occasional catechism classes. When she left home for her college studies she simply ceased to attend Mass or to think about God in any conscious way. Patricia was intelligent, likeable, and athletic, and her college years were full. She was occasionally troubled, however, to find herself assimilating some of the more self-indulgent behavior around her and to note a certain lowering of her former moral standards. In the midst of friends, busyness, and laughter, something was too empty in her heart.

One evening, Patricia learned that two of her friends had been in a serious car accident and were in critical condition. The event affected her profoundly. That evening she found herself seriously reviewing her own life and knew that she wanted to make a change. Without her advising her friends, Patricia decided to attend Mass on Sunday in the student chapel. When she joined the assembly in song and prayer that Sunday, she experienced a new sense of peace and felt new hope of finding meaning in her life.

Patricia obtained a copy of the Scriptures and began to read them daily. Still saying nothing to her friends, she continued to attend Mass each Sunday. As her life of prayer grew, Patricia became increasingly aware of the contrast between the self-indulgent life without moral restraint

and without God that she continued to share outwardly with her friends, and the hidden life of faith in God growing daily within her. She knew that these were incompatible and that she could not long avoid a clear decision to resolve this contrast.

One Sunday, Patricia remained in chapel after Mass. That day she found prayer more difficult than usual; God seemed distant and she felt little inclination to pray at all.

In the quiet of the chapel, Patricia considered the step that lay before her: to tell her friends openly that faith in God had become important to her, and that she could no longer live in contrast with the teaching of Christ. The burden of this step weighed upon her. Patricia knew that if she shared these convictions with her friends they would laugh at her. They would consider her old-fashioned and guilt-ridden, and would spread this view of her among the other students as well. Patricia feared that she might be socially abandoned as a consequence. Still another fear arose from her inability to feel God's love that Sunday morning: might she be left both without friends and without the experience of God's love? As she sat in the chapel, a decisive choice for her new life of faith seemed too difficult to accomplish.

With her heart burdened by these fears, Patricia opened the Scriptures and reread the Gospel of the Sunday Mass she had just attended – the account of Jesus walking on the water (Mt 14:22-33). She was especially struck by the experience of Peter, which seemed so similar to her own: his first steps toward Jesus on the water, and his subsequent fear when he saw the obstacles he faced. She read of his cry of fear, of Jesus' immediate saving response, and of Jesus' question to Peter: "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mt 14:31). As she sat in the chapel, those words spoke directly to Patricia's heart. She turned to the Lord, asking for strength to live her new life of faith without fear. As Patricia prayed, new hope arose within her that, with God's help, she would indeed be able to take the step that lay before her. Patricia also decided to speak with the priest at the chapel about her struggles, and resolved to call him later that day. She rose from her prayer with her heart strengthened in hope.

Patricia: Second Experience: Ten years have passed since that Sunday morning in the college chapel. During those years Patricia pursued her new life of faith with courage and dedication. She involved herself actively in the chapel community, began to pray daily, participated in student retreats, and continued to speak regularly with the chaplain. Patricia's life acquired new meaning through her growing faith, and God's love became increasingly real for her. Her deepening faith also awakened a desire to serve others, and Patricia assisted in various initiatives of service to the poor. The sense of purpose and the joy evident in her life began to draw others, and Patricia became a quiet but effective apostle for the Lord.

Six years after college Patricia married a man who shared her life of faith, and now has three children. Throughout these years, Patricia continued to pray daily and was active in her parish, above all in the service of the poor; as previously in college, she encountered Christ in a special way through assisting the disadvantaged. When Patricia would return to her family after some hours in this service, she would find her faith stronger and her awareness of Christ in her husband and children more alive.

Patricia's children grew and left home for college. Recently her pastor, aware of Patricia's love for the poor and knowing that her children were now in college, asked Patricia to consider creating a program of service to the poor in the parish. The need was real, and the program would provide an opportunity to help many. As Patricia and the pastor spoke about this, she realized that heading the program would be demanding. It would require most of her free time and the sacrifice of other activities she had hoped to undertake. It would also mean that she and her husband would have to relinquish their thoughts of moving. The pastor invited Patricia to take all the time she needed to decide.

Patricia spoke with her husband and found that he was open to the pastor's suggestion. She also spoke with her spiritual director who suggested that she pray about the decision for some weeks, and that she review her prayer and pray the examen daily. The director agreed to meet with Patricia regularly during those weeks.

When Patricia prayed about the program for the poor, she consistently felt joyful and close to the Lord, with a drawing toward this service. As the weeks unfolded, Patricia found her heart strongly inclined to say yes to the pastor. After sharing this with her director in their most recent meeting, Patricia felt that the discernment was nearing completion.

The next Sunday, Patricia attended Mass with her husband. The Gospel spoke of Christ's presence in those in need (Mt 25:31-46), and Patricia was especially struck by the words: "I was ... a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35). Earlier that week she had learned that in a few months her city would receive refugees from a war-torn third-world country, and that volunteers to assist them would be urgently needed. When she heard the priest proclaim Jesus' words "I was ... a stranger and you welcomed me," Patricia felt the Lord's presence, and spiritual joy filled her heart. She sensed that the Lord was addressing those words to her personally and in the context of the refugees. The thought of welcoming Christ in the impoverished refugees gave joy to her heart, and desire for this service grew warm within her.

Patricia recognized, however, that she could not both begin the program in the parish and serve the refugees. Finding that her heart experienced joy and a drawing toward both projects and recognizing that both were good, Patricia was confused. She only wanted to do God's will, but now did not know how to find it. Unsure of how to discern, Patricia spoke with her director and asked for help.

Rule 1

Charles is a married man with a professional background in finance. His faith has long been the center of his life; God's love has become very real for him, and a great desire to respond to that love has awakened in his heart.

During those years of faithful prayer and active service in his parish, a time came when Charles felt God's call to the diaconate. His wife and children supported this calling and found that Charles's new involvement in the Church through it caused them to grow spiritually as well. Two years ago, Charles completed his studies in theology and was ordained a deacon. His love for the liturgy led him to acquire a special competence in liturgical matters. Charles's life of

prayer grew deeply, and he served God with increasing generosity in his family, professional work, and diaconal ministry.

After his ordination Charles was assigned to a nearby parish. The pastor welcomed him warmly and invited Charles to serve as head of the parish liturgical committee. Aware of Charles's professional background, the pastor asked him to chair the parish financial board as well. Charles willingly agreed and soon realized that much needed to be done in both areas. His professional expertise contributed to a new and effective effort to reduce the large parish debt. Charles also led the parish in a creative fundraising drive which permitted long needed repairs to the church building. His love for the Mass and able guidance of the liturgical committee bore fruit in increasingly well prepared Sunday Masses in the parish. Gradually, attendance began to rise and an air of new life stirred in the parish. A quiet joy, with gratitude to God, often filled Charles's heart as he saw the work of the Lord in the parish.

As the months passed, Charles became aware of the limited number of young people involved in the parish's life. From time to time, he began to pray about this in his daily meditation. On several occasions, as he did so, Charles began to consider whether he should become actively involved in young adult ministry. When he discussed this with his wife, she reminded him that while he had a background in liturgical and financial matters, he had never worked with the young.

Still, the thought of the need to work with the young in the parish remained with Charles, and he continued to pray about this. As he did so, he found his heart warmed with the prospect of assisting the young. Joy quietly welled up in his heart as he thought of this, and he sensed God's love with him in such times. Charles recognized the truth of his wife's observation—his background in liturgical and financial matters and corresponding lack of experience of working with the young—but recognized clearly that the future of the parish lay with the young. None of his liturgical and financial contributions would last if the young of the parish were not engaged in the parish. What value had his liturgical and financial efforts if they would end when his ministry did? Perhaps the God who always calls us to new growth was inviting Charles not to remain in his comfort-zone but to “put out into the deep” in a new form of ministry. Likewise, no one else appeared interested in undertaking a ministry with the young. Charles wondered whether the joy he experienced at these thoughts was not a sign that God was calling him to explore ministry with the young, even though it might mean less availability, to some extent, for his present liturgical and financial service.

Charles realized that he needed the help of his spiritual director with this matter. In their next meeting, he shared all of this with his director and asked the director's help: Was this new thought of working with the young of God? Was it not of God? Should he speak to the pastor this and ask to begin work with the young?

Rule 2

Julien Green: “The memory of a winter evening has stuck in my mind more clearly than any other instance. It happened in the pension I tried to describe in *The Strange River*. My father and I shared the same bedroom. I was in bed; my father was saying his prayers. All of a sudden, I was seized with an unutterable happiness, a happiness of spirit that tore me free from myself. For a few minutes my soul was completely absorbed in God. I could not have said what was taking place in me, but my thoughts, instead of wandering here and there, as they usually did, came to a standstill in a sort of rapture that I have never experienced since. And the very words I use to try to describe the indescribable, only serve to confuse my memories. And yet, this is not so. What lives in my memory is the feeling of deep security – a little of which still remains – the inexpressible peace enjoyed by the soul when it takes shelter under the all-powerful wing of the Lord.” (*Diary*, May 30, 1941)

Bother Bob: “The other morning I was praying over the story of the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with expensive perfume. I was struck by the extravagance of her love.”

Director: “The extravagance of her love.”

Br. Bob: “Yes, nothing was too much for her to do for him. She took the most expensive thing she had and extravagantly poured it out on Jesus’ feet (focused here for several moments). And then the most unexpected thing happened. I was all of a sudden overwhelmed with God’s love. It was incredible.”

Director: “Gosh! Tell me about it.”

Br. Bob: “It was so unexpected and overwhelming and extravagant. God just extravagantly poured out His love on me. It was outrageous. I have felt for a long time God’s love for me, but this was so extravagant.”

Director: “Wow! God extravagantly poured out His love on you.”

Br. Bob: “Yeah. It was totally accepting love; the kind of love that you don’t have to do anything to earn. It was more than anything I could ever imagine....”

Director: “How did you feel Bob, being so extravagantly loved by God?”

Br. Bob: “I felt so deeply consoled and strengthened.”

Director: “Deeply consoled and strengthened.”

Br. Bob: “Yes. I felt a deep inner strength, totally accepted by God, confirmed by God in who I am and what I’m about as a Christian brother. I even cried, which I have not done in a long time. I was so moved. God and I were totally one. There was no gap between us.... There was no separation between us. We were totally one. The very core of my being was one with God. I

felt totally accepted by God. God is so pleased with who I am and how I am serving others as a religious.”

St. Francis of Assisi: Soon after Francis had returned to Assisi, his companions elected him king of the revels, and gave him a free hand to spend what he liked in the preparation of a sumptuous banquet as he had often done on other occasions. After the feast they left the house and started off singing through the streets. Francis’s companions were leading the way; and he, holding his wand of office, followed them at a little distance. Instead of singing, he was listening very attentively. All of a sudden the Lord touched his heart, filling it with such surpassing sweetness that he could neither speak nor move. He could only feel and hear this overwhelming sweetness which detached him so completely from all other physical sensations that, as he said later, had he been cut to pieces on the spot he could not have moved.

When his companions looked around, they saw him in the distance and turned back. To their amazement they saw that he was transformed into another man, and they asked him: ‘What were you thinking of? Why didn’t you follow us? Were you thinking of getting married?’

Francis answered in a clear voice: ‘You are right: I was thinking of wooing the noblest, richest, and most beautiful bride ever seen.’ His friends laughed at him saying he was a fool and did not know what he was saying; in reality he had spoken by a divine inspiration. The bride was none other than that form of true religion which he embraced; and which, above any other is noble, rich and beautiful in poverty.

Gerard Manley Hopkins: “As we drove home the stars came out thick: I leant back to look at them and my heart opening more than usual praised our Lord to and in whom all that beauty comes home.” (*Journal*)

St. Augustine: “How I wept when I heard your hymns and canticles, being deeply moved by the sweet singing of your Church. Those voices flowed into my ears, truth filtered into my heart, and from my heart surged waves of devotion. Tears ran down, and I was happy in my tears.” (*Confessions*)

Julien Green: I never meet anyone without being told that we are racing headlong toward an era of fresh disasters. I had a long fit of insomnia last night, during which many thoughts stirred in my mind, most of them very gloomy. Then I remembered St. Theresa of Avila’s prayer: “Let nothing trouble you, let nothing terrify you. God only.” And I once more found peace. (*Diary*, February 2, 1946)

Introduction to Rules 3-7: An Experience of Discernment

Kathy is a forty-five-year-old high school teacher. She is a woman of faith and of deep, daily prayer. Over the years, her love and union with the Lord have grown richly. Both in her family and at work, Kathy seeks to love and serve the Lord, her one, deepest desire. Others appreciate her calm and joyful presence, and through contact with her, a number have come closer to Christ and the Church. As her various commitments permit, Kathy is active in her parish, a presence that others in the community welcome.

Five years ago, Kathy was approached by the principal of an upscale high school for capable students run by a religious order. The principal shared the struggles of the high school. Because of poor management and personality conflicts, the school had suffered to the point that its viability was in question. Parents had withdrawn their children, a climate of division reigned, serious financial difficulties had arisen, and the specifically Catholic dimension of the school had nearly disappeared. Knowing Kathy and appreciating both her life of faith and her competence as a teacher, the principal asked her to teach at this high school. The principal saw her as one whose presence would strengthen the Catholic dimension of the school, foster unity, fortify the academic level of the school, and might be key to its survival. Kathy accepted.

Over the next five years, the school gradually improved. It made headway in its financial struggles, and its internal divisions began to diminish. Its Catholic dimension, in catechesis and prayer, grew more prominent. As this happened, the drop in enrollment ceased, and numbers recently have begun even to increase. The religious order and the principal began to see hope that the school might survive and continue a valuable service to young Catholics and others who would have important roles in society. Kathy's presence and teaching have been one significant cause this growth, and the principal and sisters are grateful to her.

One day, a meeting takes Kathy to an inner-city school for disadvantaged students. She is deeply struck by the poverty and great need she witnesses there. Several days later, as her morning begins, Kathy prays as usual with the day's Gospel. This day, the Gospel is from Luke 4, and verse 18 speaks deeply to her heart, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." As Kathy prays, the thought of teaching in the inner-city school arises in her heart. A stirring of deep joy, of closeness with the Lord, and a sense of the Lord's great love for her accompanies the thought and fills her prayer. Kathy begins to wonder whether joy and attraction this might be the Lord calling her to imitate him more deeply in more direct service of the poor. She knows that the inner-city school she visited recently has much need of teachers and would greatly appreciate her presence if she made herself available. During the next days, a similar joy and a sense of closeness to the Lord fill Kathy's heart as she thinks of teaching in the inner-city school. She plans to speak to Father Mark, her spiritual director, about this in their next meeting and to seek his help.

Rule 3

Servant of God Elizabeth Leseur (April 22, 1903): I set out alone for St. Peter's, and after going to Confession to a French-speaking priest, I went to Communion in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. Those moments were completely and supernaturally happy.

I felt in myself the living presence of the blessed Christ, of God Himself, bringing me an ineffable love; this incomparable Soul spoke to mine, and all the infinite tenderness of the Savior passed for an instant into me. Never will this divine trace be effaced. The triumphant Christ, the eternal Word, He who as man has suffered and loved, the one living God, took possession of my soul for all eternity in that unforgettable moment. I felt myself renewed to my very depths by Him, ready for a new life, for duty, for the work intended by His Providence. I gave myself without reserve, and I gave Him the future.

I then heard Mass in another chapel, in profound joy and peace. I prayed again, and then I knelt close to the Confession, in a last intimate and solemn consecration.

On my return I found myself in an atmosphere of irony, criticism, and indifference. But nothing mattered; the flame of Christ was still burning within me.

St. Ignatius: But when he went to rest, many times there came to him great illuminations and great spiritual consolations which caused him to lose much of the time that he had set aside for sleep, and that was not much; considering this several times, he reflected that he had decided to devote much time to dealing with God, and afterward all the rest of the day as well; and consequently he began to doubt whether those illuminations came from the good spirit, and he concluded that it would be better to reject them and to sleep during the time determined, and this he did. (*Autobiography*, 26)

Barbara is a single professional woman in her early thirties. Her relationship with God began early in life and has deepened over the years. She prays with Scripture each morning upon rising and attends daily Mass during her lunch hour; God's love has become very real for her. Barbara is active in her local community and her parish. She is intelligent, energetic, and warm-hearted, and others find her presence welcome.

Five years ago, Barbara began spiritual direction with a priest in her parish. At present, with the accompaniment of her director, she is discerning her vocational choice: marriage or religious life. She has just made an eight-day Ignatian retreat with this question in mind.

When Barbara contemplated the life of Christ during her retreat, she was deeply moved by his birth "in the greatest poverty" (*SpirEx*, 116). At the director's suggestion, she returned several times in her prayer to the poverty of Jesus who, "after so many labors, hunger, thirst, heat and cold, injuries and affronts" (*SpirEx*, 116), gave his life on the cross out of love for the world; as she prayed, Barbara continued to find this contemplation a source of abundant consolation. A new desire to love and follow Jesus more (*SpirEx*, 104) in Gospel simplicity of life was born in her.

Now Barbara has returned from her retreat. Already she has found ways to simplify her life and renounce unnecessary possessions. Each new step gives her joy and she delights in her new-found freedom in the Lord.

This morning, Barbara rises and prays with the Gospel for the day. She reads the words of Jesus to one who seeks to follow him: "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Lk 9:58). As she reads, a warm sense of God's love arises in her heart. She hears Jesus speak these words to her in a deeply personal way and a great desire to share Jesus' own complete dependence on the Father awakens within her. As she prays, new thoughts arise concerning how she may simplify her life still further. Barbara rises from her prayer and begins her day with joy in her heart.

Rule 7

Anne is a twenty-nine-year-old single woman. She has an undergraduate degree in business and has worked successfully in an accounting firm for the past several years. Recently Anne returned to school to earn a graduate degree as well, and is now a full time university student. She is in the fall semester of her first of two years of studies toward this end.

Faith was very real for Anne from an early age. For a time in high school and in her first years of college, Anne thought less about her faith, but then felt again her desire for God and began to live her faith with renewed dedication. For the past ten years, God has been very much at the center of her life. After college, Anne began to spend an hour each morning in quiet prayer and to attend daily Mass during her lunch hour. As time passed, Anne's prayer gradually deepened and simplified; the regular spiritual direction she sought assisted her greatly in this growth.

In these same years Anne also became active in her parish. She joined the lay associates of a community of religious women in her city and dedicated time on weekends and in the summers to share in their service of the poor. Anne grew close to these religious women and came to esteem them and their work highly.

Anne also sought ways to live her faith actively in the secularized atmosphere of the university. She formed a group of students which met weekly to discuss issues of faith, and was pleased to find the group increasingly well attended. Anne noted with quiet joy that a number of the participants began to think about God in a new way.

When she returned to studies after her years in the business world, Anne found that the question of her calling in life came insistently to the fore. She asked God in prayer to see clearly how she was to serve in life. A desire grew within her to respond without reservation to the God whose love she knew so deeply.

One day Anne was speaking with a member of the religious community whose ministry she shared as an associate. This woman, seeing Anne's evident love for service of the poor, suggested that she investigate the community's volunteer program for those who desired further involvement in such service. This would involve, the woman explained, two years of living with and working among the poor in a Third World country. Anne was drawn to this possibility and wondered whether God might be speaking to her through this woman. Anne also knew that this program might help her to answer a question increasingly present in her thoughts: whether God might be calling her to join this religious community and dedicate her life to its work.

When Anne discussed this with her spiritual director, the director suggested that dedicate time daily to prayer with Scripture, seeking light from God in this discernment. He also explained how to review her prayer and to pray the daily examen. He suggested that Anne journal and note what occurred in her prayer and daily spiritual experience. Anne was very willing and began the process.

The prayer deepened Anne's awareness of the Lord as her Redeemer and Healer. As she prayed with Jesus in the Gospels, Anne felt a strong desire to respond to his call; her heart was

profoundly drawn to the poverty and humility of Christ, and the thought of sharing in his dedication to the poor gave her joy.

One afternoon, Anne was walking home from class. Suddenly, she felt herself totally enveloped in the love of the Lord. Her heart lifted in great joy to the God whose closeness and love she felt so deeply. In that unforgettable experience of God's infinite love, Anne simply knew, with great clarity, that God was calling her to serve in the volunteer program. The warmth of that blessed experience of grace remained with Anne for several days. In her next meeting with her director, she described this time of joy and clarity. The director confirmed it as of God.

Several days later, as her prayer continued, Anne contemplated the text of the beatitudes. As she reflected on the first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3), Anne again felt joy at the thought of her call to serve the poor in the third world. In her prayer during the following weeks, Anne repeatedly experienced this same joy-filled desire to serve the poor. She shared these experiences too with her director; it seemed very clear that God was calling her to join the volunteer program in late spring when new candidates would be accepted. Again the director confirmed her discernment, and Anne began to make plans to this end.

A few weeks later, Anne prayed with the Gospel account of the sending of the twelve (Mt 10:1-16). She was struck by Jesus' call to proclaim the Gospel among the "lost sheep" of the people of God. Her thoughts turned to the students in the university who so frequently seemed lonely and confused, without community, without faith, and without clear meaning in life. Anne reflected on the spiritual assistance that the weekly group was providing for a growing number of students and the spiritual good that could be accomplished if she continued to lead this group. As she thought of these things, Anne felt a deep joy and peace in God. A warm desire to heed the Gospel call of Jesus and to serve these "lost sheep" stirred in her heart.

Anne knew that it would be difficult to renounce the volunteer program and the joy of life together with the other religious and volunteers; she knew that it would not be easy to delay or perhaps to relinquish altogether the service of the poor she so loved. She was conscious that for her life on the secularized campus would in many ways be more demanding than service of the poor in the Third World. The twinge of uneasiness that mingled with her thoughts did not alter the joy that Anne felt at the prospect of serving God among the university students. She knew that Jesus himself never chose the easier way, and her one desire was to be totally available to God's call, regardless of the sacrifice involved. In the following days, Anne considered her next meeting with her director and how she would share her new conviction that God was calling her to ministry among the students. Anne also contemplated the concrete steps which she would take in coming months to prepare for this ministry.

Rule 8

Philip is a fifty-two-year-old married man deeply dedicated to Christ. For many years he has sought to love God and his family, and to witness faithfully to the Lord in the workplace. Over these same years Philip has developed a deep life of prayer and a growing closeness to God. His

life is full and, in the vicissitudes of daily living, Philip experiences a profoundly rooted sense of God's love.

One year ago, Philip was reflecting on God's great goodness to him throughout his life. As he prayed, Philip was moved by a profound sense of gratitude, and a desire to respond more fully to that love arose in his heart. For some years he had felt drawn to serve as deacon in the Church; in his prayer that day, Philip wondered whether the Lord might indeed be calling him to this new gift of self in service. In the following weeks Philip discussed this calling with his wife and children, all of whom supported his interest in the diaconate. Philip then spoke with his pastor who likewise encouraged him, and suggested that Philip consider making a retreat to discern this call more fully. Philip welcomed the suggestion and planned to do so when work would allow.

That summer Philip made his retreat at a local retreat house near the sea. He willingly prayed with the Scriptures proposed by the director, and found the days blessed with a warm sense of God's closeness.

On the fifth day, Philip went out walking along the shore. After a time, he sat by the water, thinking of nothing in particular, simply watching the gulls and the waves. Suddenly, he felt the presence of God in a powerful and almost overwhelming way, a way he had never known before. Philip was absolutely sure that the experience was from God; every inch of his being knew it. The certainty brought with it a great sense of awe, and he broke into tears. Philip had never felt so totally loved by God. The experience was so profound that his tears continued often throughout the day and again when he spoke with his director that evening.

The warmth of that grace-filled experience by the sea remained with Philip during the next days of retreat, and he continued to reflect upon that great gift of love. Philip perceived that something new had entered his relationship with God through that experience. He sensed that this new manifestation of God's love was also an invitation to show his own love in a new way. It seemed evident that this new response of love must be the call to the diaconate that he was even then discerning in the retreat. With joy in his heart, Philip understood that his discernment was complete; he now knew that God was indeed calling him to serve as deacon. Philip looked forward to sharing this new-found clarity with his director that evening.