



Franciscan Friars

PROVINCE OF SAINT BARBARA



DISCERNING A FRANCISCAN VOCATION

WHAT IS DISCERNMENT?

God has given a special vocation, a unique mission, to each person. It lies within the soul, waiting to be discovered. The realization of one's vocation can occur at different stages in one's life. For some, it is an easy and almost effortless discovery. For others, it can be a long and arduous search.

The word "discernment" comes from the Latin "discernere" which means "to separate." When one is "discerning", it means he or she is taking time apart in order to pray, think, reflect, and discover the unique plan God has for his or her life.

The vocation to the consecrated life is a special call from God. To begin the discernment process, it is important to follow a program of spiritual growth. Below are seven steps to help you in your process of discernment.

The 7 steps for discernment are:

- 1. Keep a journal:** We are human and we tend to forget what happens to us on a daily basis. Develop and maintain a personal journaling discipline to remember your thoughts and reactions.
- 2. Find a spiritual director:** The spiritual life of a Franciscan focuses on walking together with others who believe in a living God. Look for a guide that has a deep prayerful life and can help you in your discernment.
- 3. Read and meditate about your life and scripture:** Use the Gospels and Franciscan sources as a guide to find reflection subjects.
- 4. Serve God and others according to the way you have been called:** Participate in various ministries and service so you can examine your vocation more deeply.
- 5. Participate in a discernment group:** Participate in a group of faith and discernment. In your parish or elsewhere, participate in a community of people who speak and act in faith. For example, a group of men or a Franciscan youth group or a group of volunteers in ministry, etc. Also, take part in events of discernment where you'll have the opportunity to share in prayer, ministry and the Franciscan life.
- 6. Take some time to reflect:** After you have served and experienced different ways of expressing the Franciscan evangelic vision, think about your reactions to these experiences. Share these reactions with your spiritual director who can help you reflect.
- 7. Repeat the previous six steps:** Share your experiences with others that are on the same path of discerning religious life or a Franciscan life.

