

*Make a difference!*  
*A guide for life choice*

*God has shown you, O people, what is good. And what does God ask of you? To act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.*

– Micah 6:8

### *1. Listening to God's purpose*

God has left us, and continues to leave us, some clear information about God's purpose for the world. It is revealed fully in Jesus Christ and in the disciples who choose the way of Jesus even to this day.

God wants healing of the woundedness in the world, peace for those threatened by violence, nourishment for the hungry and freedom for the oppressed. Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., Francis and Clare of Assisi, Jean Donovan and others are or have been committed to using their lives for God's purpose. Important to these followers of the way of Jesus is *making a difference in the world*.

And that difference has to do with being and acting in a way that makes God's mission visible. Do you have a passion for God's purpose? Do you perceive in yourself a deep desire for "life to the full" (John 10:10)– for yourself and all who live and breathe? *Do you wonder what kind of difference you are called to make?*

### *2. Listening to your heart*

Do you know that there is no one in the universe like you? Are you aware that the universe and its Creator need your consciously lived life? In the depths of your heart, the place where your true feelings live – and the place where God's Spirit touches yours – you hold your decision about your life choices.

See if you can become very quiet and move your focus down to your heart's center. Practice this. And then listen; perhaps pose these questions to yourself:

- What do I want *most* in life?
- What are my greatest fears?
- What are my deepest hopes?
- What makes me most alive?
- What is God like?
- Can I name my feelings about God, myself, the world?
- When I imagine myself in religious life or priesthood, what feelings arise in my heart?
- When I imagine myself married or single, what feelings arise?
- What gifts would I bring to religious life, married life, single life?
- Can I see myself studying theology and enjoying it?
- Can I see myself living and working in a group? How does that feel?
- Do I value interdependence or independence most?
- When I picture myself five years from now in each life vocation, what images arise? What feelings come to me?

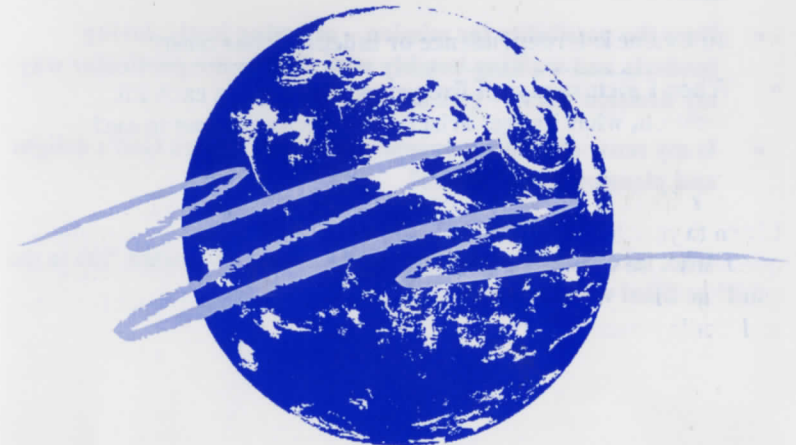
Ask God's Spirit what steps you might take toward a life choice. Listen to your heart and to God's response. Take your time with these questions. Use weeks or months to consider them. Keep notes on what you hear when you prayerfully listen to your heart. Trust your feelings and God's presence and love.

### *3. Listening to the data available*

Life is messy and challenging. Decision-making isn't easy; get all the help available to you and also trust your heart and your personal listening to God's Spirit.

Walter Brueggeman says that vocation is "finding a purpose for being in the world that is related to the purposes of God." That is a sacred process and you need information and assistance in discerning. Some of the following suggestions may be helpful:

- Gather with others who are searching for their life choice; form a prayer or support group.
- Read books and articles on the various life choices and discernment. Search the web.
- Visit with people who have chosen a particular Christian vocation. What are they like? How are their gifts to the Church being used? Do you feel that you fit with them? Consider your options.
- Remember that a vocation is a call from God. Spend time in prayer. Ask for the gift of openness. And, always, listen to your heart.
- Seek a spiritual companion or mentor to talk with about your feelings and what happens in your prayer as you explore possibilities. Take part in a retreat.



#### *4. Listening to the decision being made in you*

Someone once said that the best expression of God's will is the line in John's Gospel, "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

That makes sense. God's will is fullness of life for all God's people and for the whole world. Many forces that are counter to this purpose are at work in the world – among them are violence, war, racism, sexism, greed and unhappiness. As you make an important decision, take care that it is life-giving for you, and then it will enable you to be a life giver for the world.

As you are being moved toward a decision, having listened to God's purpose, your heart, the data available (including feedback from people consulted), live with your likely decision for a while. As you imagine yourself making a life choice and taking steps to pursue it, ask yourself some questions:

- **Does this decision bring peace to me?**
- **Is this choice in harmony with my gifts and personality?**
- **Am I able to do all that will be required of me in this life choice?**
- **Does this decision free me?**
- **If it doesn't work out, can I imagine other options?**
- **Do I get a sense of excitement, challenge, and possibility for growth as I consider this decision?**
- **Does the possibility for mission – of acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly with God in the particular way my decision offers – give me energy?**
- **Is my sense of God's response one that indicates God's delight and pleasure in my choice?**

If so, take the next step. And may your journey toward "life to the full" be filled with blessings.

**Loving Creator of the universe,  
I come before You with the great desire  
to live life fully, and to make a positive  
difference on this earth.**

**You, compassionate God,  
call all people to co-create with You  
a universe of respect and healing,  
of justice and beauty.**

**How can I do that in the best possible way?  
Speak to me. Teach me to know myself,  
You and Your world through listening  
attentively to Your Spirit.**

**Help me to know the vocational path  
through which I can best "act justly,  
love tenderly and walk humbly"  
with You, my God.**

**Amen.**

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