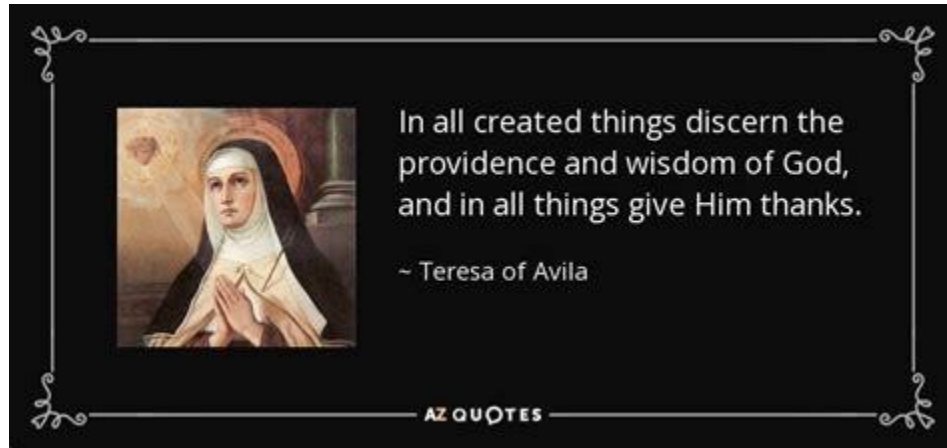


FROM FATHER JOHN: *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths.”* (Proverbs 3:5, 6)



One of the things that I sometime preach about is discerning the will of God in our lives and then following God's will by making His will our own will in life. But this begs the question of how we discern the will of God so that we can know with certainty what God is calling us to in life, in a particular situation or in a particular relationship. After all, God generally does not send emails, or make phone calls, informing us of what he is calling us to do with our lives.

First, God never calls us to do something that is immoral, sinful, against God's law as revealed through the Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church. We can never claim that God is calling us to steal, to murder someone, to commit adultery, to lie, to cheat, etc. God only calls us to the moral good. Second, when God calls us, He is persistent, He never lets up, He continues to call us day after day. He is like the hound of heaven who pursues us out of His great love for us.

This happened in my life. My first serious thoughts about the priesthood came while I was in college, yet I didn't enter seminary until twelve years after I graduated from college. God kept calling. I didn't do a very good job listening to God for a large part of those twelve years. But God kept calling because he knew that I would find great joy and happiness in the priesthood.

Third, the fruits of the Holy Spirit always accompany God's call. Peace and joy are always part of God's will for us. Take St. Ignatius of Loyola as an example. He was born in 1491 and always wanted to be a military officer, dreaming of winning

battles and returning home to sweep the woman of his dreams off her feet. He later admitted that he was focused on vain desires and was self-absorbed. He was struck by a cannonball and his leg was shattered. He returned home and during his recovery, the only books that were available to him were *The Life of Christ* and *The Lives of the Saints*. Ignatius became fascinated by our Lord Jesus and he was inspired by the heroic lives of the saints. He also noticed that as he read about Jesus and the things of God, ***he experienced a peace and joy in his soul. This peace and joy lasted.*** However, when he thought about the things of the world, he experienced a temporary exhilaration, which quickly was followed by aridity and sadness.

Fourth, other people often confirm what God is calling us to. God works through our families, our friends, our teachers, our bishops and priests. God even works through strangers. In hindsight, I had an incredible number of different people make various comments to me about the priesthood. I had so many of these experiences that I truly came to realize that God was speaking to me through all these other people, none of whom knew I was discerning the priesthood.

God has a plan for each of us. God has a will for each of us every day. God has a plan for us in every situation we face in life. God always calls out to us and lets us know what His plan is. Our duty as disciples of Jesus Christ is simple; to listen to God's call with every fiber of our being, make God's will our own and then act on God's will.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.