



What is discernment?

In the RCIA process we hear a great deal about discernment. Yet there is a danger that it becomes the aspect we spend least time on or do in a very perfunctory way. The reason for this is twofold. It requires time and deep conversation.

Discernment is about discovering. Discovering in our life what is of “God” and what is not, what is to be fostered and what is to be fought, it is a process of listening to life and trying to detect the movement of God.

The movement of God is revealed to us in our concrete situation. Discernment is the art of finding meaning in our daily lived lives, reflecting on this and responding to the dynamic relationship we have with God. The question becomes: “What is God inviting me to do and how do I respond to this invitation?”

Within the RCIA process discernment is collaborative, between the seeker and the RCIA guide/s. It is a conversation that occurs continually but needs to be particularly attended to before each of the hinge rites. Discernment enables the seeker to recognise their readiness, or not, to move into the next stage of pilgrimage.

Many RCIA resources present a series of questions for use to determine readiness to move on through the process. There is a danger that answering the questions replaces true discernment. These questions are starters, reminders to the guides of the kind of things that need to be established, however discernment moves from the tick box, questions answered! to an engagement with the Spirit. Be warned! It takes time.

Discernment also plays an important part in determining with seekers how the process of RCIA will be entered into. Each person has a unique story and path towards Baptism or full incorporation. Discernment recognises this reality and enables a pathway that honours the life journey and ensures “the rite is so arranged that no greater burden than necessary (see Acts 15:28) is required for the establishment of communion and unity”.¹

¹ Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (Approved for use in Australia and New Zealand) #387