

# Pondering Life's Choices

(Discernment process developed by Mary Ann Spangler, HM)

**Each step listed below takes time and conscious effort. They may overlap and may also involve using a variety of resources and processes to achieve clarity.**

**1) Have a relationship with God.** Developing this relationship through prayer enables us to see more clearly how God might be leading us. The guidance of a spiritual director will also support our search for God's will in our lives and help us see our choices more clearly.

**2) Identify the real Self.** A discerning person has a realistic perception of self, not hiding behind masks, or influenced by flattery or fantasy.

**3) Seek knowledge of options.** Discernment involves choosing between two or more options. It is important to name each option and apply discernment steps to each option. Gathering and sifting through information regarding the various options is crucial to making a good decision. However, we will NEVER have all the information.

**4) Reflect on one's freedom to recognize and explore the options.** This includes being aware of the influences in my life that keep me from making and carrying out my commitments. Material or psychological attachments, health issues, addictions, self image, image of God and fear are just some of the factors that can keep us from being free to choose God's leading.

**5) Listen for the wisdom.** Pay attention to all the "influences" and voices which are persuasive. Pray for the gift of wisdom and insight.

**6) Weigh the "pro" and the "con".** This involves using both one's head and one's heart. We need the capacity to understand, reason logically, compare and weigh different considerations and form judgments based on rational arguments. Equally important, however, is the ability to listen to one's heart.

**7) Notice what values of the pros and cons match, support and strengthen your own core values.** Pay attention to your own personal values, those qualities, things that are most important to you. Make a list or journal these so you can match them with each of the options.

**8) Pay attention to the "great desires.** Our "great desires" put us in tune with God's desires and express what God wants us to become.

**9) Experience confirmation or its opposite (!) doubt and confusion.** After we make a decision, either a feeling or "rightness" or peace confirms that decision, or we feel more confused, unsure, doubting the choice we've made. If the latter is true, continue to pray for clarity and light and stay in the process.