



JESUIT VOLUNTEER CORPS

DISCERNING TRAVEL AS A JESUIT VOLUNTEER

We encourage any JV considering travel outside of their community for more than two consecutive days/overnight to enter into a discernment process. First, be sure to spend time reflecting on your own before holding an intentional conversation about travel with your JVC community, and lastly, schedule time to talk with your coordinator. JVC has created this method of discernment for travel as a resource for you and your community to utilize.

1. **Review the JVC Guide and Covenant.** As a primary step in your discernment process, we encourage you to revisit and reflect upon the JVC Guide and Covenant, specifically on “Living Simply.”
2. **Spend time reflecting on simple living.** Sit with the questions below, journal and mull them over.
 - How might traveling effect your commitment to live in solidarity with those you serve who often don’t have the financial means to fund travel?
 - How might you be tapping into social resources (e.g., family or friends assisting with paying for your trip) or financial resources outside of your stipend to fund your travel?
 - What messages does your decision send to your JVC community surrounding the commitments you have made? To your local community? To your agency and placement?
 - What insights have you gained from discussions with community mates? How might your decision affect them?
 - Have you been able to pray honestly about this? Where do you feel God guiding you in this decision?
 - What opportunities for growth in personal/communal/cultural/familial development are present by a decision to stay? To go? Have you considered what pieces of local community and culture you might be missing out on if you travel outside of your JV community during the holidays?
3. **Enter into discernment through prayer.** Starting on the next page, you will find additional prayers for your discernment. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity as a discernment of two goods. One good takes the form of travel, visiting other JV’s, family, etc., and the other good takes the form of living out the covenant; being in solidarity and living out your mission in the local community.
4. **Speak with your coordinator.** After you’ve spent time actively engaging in the discernment process, please schedule a time to talk with your coordinator and walk them through your discernment process, how you’ve gone about answering the questions above, and discuss anything that has surfaced for you.



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“WHERE TO BEGIN?” A METHOD OF DISCERNMENT

1. Continual Prayer

A daily, living relationship with God is a precondition for good discernment. Seeking God's will requires growing in one's relationship with God. No one knows God's will without knowing God. Regular prayer, with the help of a spiritual director, will enable you to see more clearly how God might be leading you.

- Do I have the desire to do God's will?
- Do I have a sense of knowing God or knowing about God?
- Have I had experiences that help me believe God knows me and cares about me?
- Can I be open with God?

2. Through Knowledge of the Options

Discernment involves choosing between two or more options. Gathering and sifting through information regarding the various options is crucial to making a good decision.

*Note: We never have *all* the information.

- Do I have an option between two or more choices?
- How much information do I have about each of the options?
- How much information do I need to make a good decision?

3. Prayerful Reflection on one's Freedom to Accept or Reject the Options

To know and follow God's will means that we are aware of the forces in our lives that keep us from making and carrying out our commitments. Material or psychological attachments, health issues, addictions, self-image, image of God, fear are just some of the factors that can keep us from being free to choose God's leading.

- What are the forces or influences that work against me making a free decision?
- What am I most afraid of regarding each of the options?
- To what (or whom) am I too attached to make a free decision?

4. Rational and Affective Weighing of the “Pros and Cons”

The process of discernment involves both “using one's head” and “trusting one's feelings.” One needs 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 our feelings, our “heart,” in that process of weighing the advantages and disadvantages of various considerations.

- List the advantages for each of the options.
- List the disadvantages for each of the options.
- Review each of the lists and prioritize them.
- Which option are you most attracted to? Why?
- What are your motivations behind wanting one option over the other?
- What would you advise another person if facing the similar choices?
- Imagine yourself on your deathbed. Ask yourself what choice from that perspective you wish you would have made.



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- Imagine yourself facing your final judgment. What decision would you wish you had made?

5. Pay Attention to the “Great Desires”

Discernment is a way of sifting through our desires and passions, so that our lives may be shaped by the best of them. Our “great desires” put us in tune with God’s desires and express what God wants us to become.

- An artist is someone who cannot conceive of not painting. A writer also HAS to write. What is it, deep within you, which you MUST do to be true to yourself?
- If you could do your heart’s desire, what would it be?
- What do you think and feel God hopes for you?

6. Experience of Confirmation or its Opposite, Doubt and Confusion

After one makes a decision, either a feeling of “rightness” or peace confirms that decision, or one can feel more confused, unsure, doubting the choice made. If the latter occurs, continue to pray for clarity and light.

- Take a week imagining you have made the choice for one of the options considered. How does it feel? Is there peace? Restlessness?
- Take a week imagining you have chosen the other option considered. How does it feel? Peaceful? Restless?
- How do you feel when you tell God of the choice you wish to make?

PRAYERS FOR DISCERNMENT

A Morning Prayer

“May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God.

Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.

It is there for each and every one of us.”

--Teresa of Avila

Meditation on A Morning Prayer

In times of discernment, it is important that we acknowledge God is with us and lovingly sitting by our sides as we face a big, or challenging decision. It is important to be present to all of your surroundings and stirrings, both internal and external, and trust in the love God has for you and God’s desire that you may flourish. Sit with this prayer of St. Teresa of Avila for a moment. Ask yourself, what rings true for me in this time and place? What is not ringing true for me during this time and place?

Continue >



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Patient Trust

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in
everything
to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate
stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to
something
unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability—
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue
haste.

Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ

What we choose
changes us.

Who we love
transforms us.

How we create
remakes us.

Where we live
reshapes us.

So in all our choosing,
O God, make us wise;

in all our loving,
O Christ, make us bold;

in all our creating,
O Spirit, give us courage.

in all our living
may we become whole.

**Jan L. Richardson (*In Wisdom's Path:
Discovering the Sacred in Every Season,*
Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000)**