



# YOUR PERSONAL DISCERNMENT RETREAT FROM JVC

## Setting Up Your Space

It is important to set aside intentional time to be contemplative and reflect on your attachments, expectations, and freedoms. To set yourself up for a great self-led discernment retreat, we invite you to prepare the following:

- **Find a quiet space.** Set aside a room or space in your backyard for designated reflection time. If you share space with others, agree to limited noise and distractions during that time. You might want to also use/include: incense, candles, and a bell as a way to make the space feel special.
- **Go technology free.** If possible, turn off your cell phone! If it is helpful to block out external noise by using your phone to play instrumental music throughout your retreat, then we suggest that you turn off your notifications from other platforms and apps.
- **Bring your journal.** You can definitely print out these pages, or you might use a notebook you already have to write with and respond to the activities within this guide.
- **Take a moment to ground and center.** We invite you to start your retreat with a few deep breaths and our prayer below!

## Opening Your Retreat

As you begin to tune into what is happening in your body, in this moment, what do you notice is coming up for you? Is it question, doubt, or hesitation? Is it excitement, energy, or fulfillment? Is it a combination? Part of discernment is asking questions: What questions am I sitting with? At times, it may feel like questions are all that you have, but eventually you will find yourself arriving at an answer that has manifested because of your thorough practice of discernment.

Take five deep breaths in and out your nostrils before starting the opening prayer.

## Opening Prayer

May I be divinely guided through these questions  
May the grace of the Spirit console me  
May I receive the gift of clarity amidst uncertainty  
And, may all be revealed in time, Amen.

## What are my attachments?



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For the next 10-15 minutes, consider what some of your personal attachments might be:

Considerations	What are some of my attachments?
People	
Places	
Activities	
Routines	
Objects	
Foods	
Lifestyles	
Comforts	

For the next 10-15 minutes journal about the following questions:

1. Which of these are keeping me from freely entering into this commitment?
2. In what ways am I ready to let go of some of these?
3. In what ways am I not ready or able to let go of some of these?
4. What are the attachments in my life over which I have no control?

### What are my expectations?



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Now that you have reflected on some of your attachments, what are some expectations you are placing on this experience or next step? List them in the left hand column and respond to the question posed in the left hand column.

<b>Expectations</b>	<b>How might my expectations be realistic? Unrealistic? Where am I being called to grow in “indifference?”</b>

For the next 10 minutes journal about the following questions:

1. What are my genuine interests and desires in considering this option?
2. Do my desires and expectations match up with the intention/mission of this option?

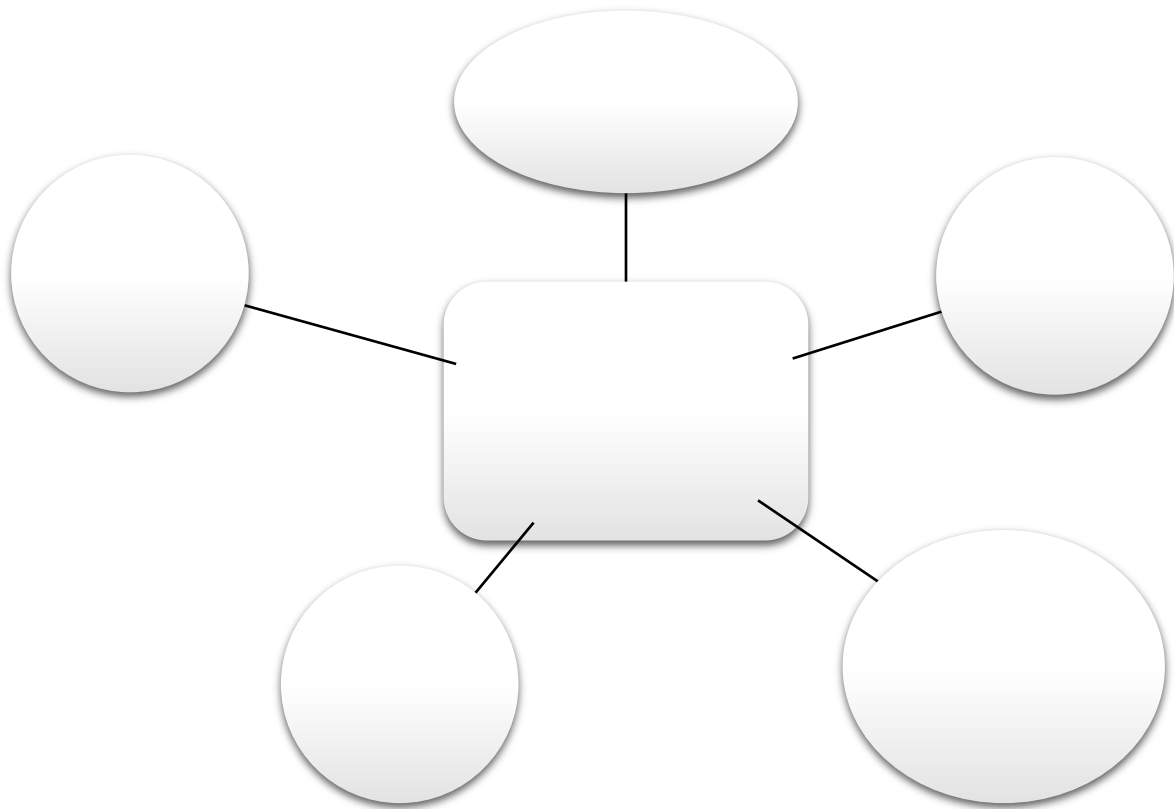
**Where does a sense of freedom emerge from within me?**



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When you quiet yourself, where are you feeling drawn? To what are you feeling drawn? When you consider the potential decisions you could make to serve with this program, what decision creates the most freedom within you? In what direction do you feel a genuine sense of peace?

Use the diagram below to explore the ways in which you may feel freedom as it pertains to the choices you are considering for your next steps right now:



### Closing Your Retreat

It can be easier to rush through the day, to rise and then sleep all the while moving briskly through our daily routines. But with a 5-step reflection process, such as the Examen, we are given an opportunity to take part in a daily practice of noticing the good in our lives. The Examen is a



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prayer made popular by St. Ignatius and is a method to slow down and intentionally think through the day, your experiences, interactions, relationships, and emotions.

It is through this practice, that our true, kind and loving selves can interact more fully with those in our lives, and perhaps even with God. With 15-minutes set aside to recollect, show gratitude, notice the good showing up for us in new ways, and notice when we failed to notice to the good around us, that we find the space within ourselves to recommit to seeing God in all things and people.

Set aside some time for prayer, quiet yourself and make your way through these 5-steps that make up the Examen. This particular Examen is inspired from Dennis Hamm, SJ but there are numerous versions.

### **Prayer for Light**

It is only with the aid of the Holy Spirit that I can truly know myself as I am. My desire is to see myself free of all self-deception. For this reason, I call upon the Holy Spirit to give me the grace to see myself as I am seen by God.

### **Thanksgiving**

This is recognition that “All is gift.” Our very being comes from God. All that we are and all that we have stems from God’s infinite grace and mercy.

### **Survey of Self**

Seeking to know what is happening to me and where the God is in my life. Sorting through my moods, feelings, and urges. Sorting out the spirits that are moving in my life. Listening to God at the core of my being. More important than what I have done is the question why am I doing these things. It is finding the root of my actions. Where have I seen God today? Where did I miss God today?

### **Contrition**

Expressing sorrow for where I have failed to respond to God’s call.

### **Hopeful Resolution**

Facing the future with hope in God and not in myself. Resolving to seek the face of God in my day-to-day interactions.

## 5 METHODS FOR CONTINUED DISCERNMENT

We know, we know, discernment can sometimes seem like a buzzword once you have heard it enough times from your professor or friend, the Jesuit priest you spoke with after Mass, or even a JVC staff member you just spoke to on the phone or via email. We hope these five methods help you



continue exploring next steps in the spirit of discernment.

### **Thorough 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?

### **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?

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

### **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 that you MUST do to be true to yourself?



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- If you could do your heart's desire, what would it be?
- What do you think and feel God hopes for you?

### **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 prayer 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?
- What questions am I comfortable with remaining unanswered, and why?
- What does this mean for my discernment? How can I continue to engage in my discernment process after this retreat?