

Each week for the summer, a parishioner will reflect on a section of Pope Francis' Call to Holiness: his new Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad)*, which you can read at <http://w2.vatican.va>

### **Discernment (paragraphs 166-175)**

For many years when I heard the word "discernment" I thought it was a prayerful practice reserved for people who were contemplating religious life. It wasn't meant for the ordinary person. In Pope Francis' text on discernment, this is NOT the case at all, in fact, quite the opposite. We are *all* called to the gift of the Spirit through our Catholic faith and the grace of our Baptism. In his words, discernment "calls for something more than intelligence or common sense." We need to pray earnestly that we open to the fullness of our Christian calling through the Spirit.

Pope Francis clearly states that discernment is essential for all Christians, particularly in our current environment of rapid change. We can be pulled in a million different directions, given how quickly information and technology surround our daily lives. This can be especially dangerous because "the world presents all of them as valid and good."

Contemplation/discernment takes a commitment of our time. During these times of reflection we examine "what is within us, our desires, anxieties, fears and questions." Are these some of the blocks preventing us from an intimate relationship with God? Pope Francis calls on us to make a daily "examination of conscience." When we look at ourselves in the safety and honesty of God's love there is transformation. We move from being self-reliant to God-reliant.

Be faithful to your times of discernment. The changes you experience will carry you to a deeper relationship with God, your neighbors, your environment. This is what God intends for us, to be full and whole in our own skin and with each other.

I hope that you have heard my enthusiasm on this rich, deep, loving and necessary teaching. I have just scratched the surface. Treat yourself and download and print a copy of this Apostolic Exhortation. You will not tire from reading it over and over again.

—Karen McNamara