

The Art of Decision Making

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Have you ever been on a journey where you reach a fork in the road and were unsure about which path to take? Decision making can be thought of being on this path and reaching that point where you are not sure of the next step. In fact, our lives are filled with these points which call us to make decisions every day.

Many decisions are small and not so significant, for example, which cereal to eat for breakfast or which video to watch tonight. Other decisions have more importance. Which friends do I choose, which college should I attend, or which nursing facility is best for grandma? Still other decisions call for a lifetime commitment. Who will I share the rest of my life with? How can I live a fulfilled adult life in the Church? Is Church ministry a value to me? What are my values? Is God calling me to the priesthood or religious life?

When answering these questions, that is, when looking at decisions of great significance, we come to a time on the journey when we need to examine all the options, follow the lead of the Spirit and say "Yes" to making a decision.

There are several steps to making an important life decision. The first is the awareness that an important decision needs to be made. It's essential to be alert to the prompting of the Spirit, especially in crucial times. Decision making is not always a crisis but is always a growth-filled process. As you consider your options, be attentive to the process and to your feelings throughout it. Secondly, make a mental list or jot down the pros and cons of the various options involved in making this particular decision. This doesn't have to be an extremely formal process, but is an important step, because it places all the options clearly before you.

Next ask yourself about possible consequences for each option or how each might fit into your life's goals and plans. Then pray about the decision. Simply ask God for guidance. Asking for wisdom and the openness to do God's will may allow your heart to be open to whatever may be encountered along the way. Fourthly, check it out with a mentor, family member, trusted friend, or "wisdom" friend who has gone through a similar life experience. Although the decision is yours to make, running it past another listening ear and checking it out with someone who knows you well can be of great help. Know you are not alone, and take comfort in knowing that such a decision is not unique to you alone. A true friend or a good mentor will not make the decision for you, but will lovingly support you. Next, comes the true test of all in decision making, taking action! Now, you've made the decision and are ready to "test the waters" and "walk the talk". Don't be afraid of making a decision, because Jesus assures us "love casts out all fear". If one's heart is in the right place and one is striving for attitudes like those of Jesus and Mary, who modeled for us decision making in their lives, then the best decision will have been made.

Finally, when the decision is made and acted upon, a sense of true peace will prevail over you. Peace is the ultimate gift of a good decision - a peace no one can take from you.