An Exercise in Personal Discernment

(This exercise is adapted from *Discernment: The Art of Choosing Well* by Pierre Wolff)

> *"To use the tool that we call discernment, we must come to stillness. In the silence of our hearts, we must wait patiently for the compass needle to steady. Then it will point to true north, the still center, the fine point of the soul, and we will be enabled to move forward again."*
>
> *Inner Compass* by Margaret Silf

1. Put before your mind the choice you need to make. Clarify it; state it below with the most specific and straightforward language possible.

2. Pay attention to any initial leanings you have, one way or the other, that might influence your ability to know and choose God's path and that which serves the greater good. Write those down.

3. Be still. Pray and ask for Divine guidance. Record any impressions, images or ideas that come to you.

4. Now consider all the significant aspects that inform your decision. If helpful, create a mind map of those things (values, opportunities, current conditions, constraints, needs, desires).

5. Make a list of the possible options and include the advantages and disadvantages; the benefits and costs related to each option.

6. Review the information you have gathered. Now decide which alternative appears to be more reasonable. Write it down and explain why this option seems best.

7. Finally, weigh with your heart the alternative you've chosen. How does it feel to you? Do you experience consolation? Sit with it in silence. Pray and ask God to confirm the rightness of it. Record your response.

A Values Criteria Exercise for Discernment in a Decision

In the following exercise, you will identify what you value most related to a particular decision you are trying to make. A value is something you care deeply about. It is a personal belief or preference you have that influences the decisions you make and actions you take. Your values will each be given a score to represent their importance or weight related to your desires. You will use these scored values to analyze and compare your options related to a decision you are considering.

1. List the things that are important to you, that you value, related to this decision. Your list should include a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 values.

2. Now go back over the list and give a score between 1 and 5 based on the importance of each value.

1	2	3	4	5
less	somewhat	important	very	non-negotiable

3. Now consider all the potential options you have to choose related to this decision. Label them A, B, C, etc.

4. Evaluate one option at a time in relationship to each value.

    - If Option A strongly fulfils a value that is non-negotiable, then give the score of 5. If it would only partially fulfill a non-negotiable value then give it a lesser score (4,3,2 or 1).

    - Do this for each of the values, rating how well each option fulfills that value. The highest score an option can receive is the score assigned to that value.

    Example: If you have a value, for instance, of "not moving" and you've given the weight of that value a score of "3", then if Option A strongly supports that value, the most it could receive is a "3".

    - Tally each option's score. Which one is the highest? Which ones are really close? What do you learn about your decision and the options you have?

Example: Decision: Which house should I buy?

Values:	Score:
● Three bedrooms	5
● Two baths	5
● Walkable community	4
● Large yard	3
● Charm	2
● Move-in condition	5
● In my price range of $90-$100k	5
● Garage	3
● Within 15 minutes of work	3
● Near green space	2

House A:
House B:
House C: