Spiritual Theology: Spirituality of Diocesan Priesthood
IPF Training Program in Spiritual Direction

“Noticing God at Work in Priestly Life”

Instructions

This worksheet is designed to help participants focus on the ways in which God is active in the everyday lives of diocesan priests. There are four principle pastoral situations in which we ask each participant to pay attention to God’s activity: preaching, “spiritual conversation/spiritual direction,” counseling (marriage, crisis, parental, etc.) and hospital visitation. For each of these four situations, participants should respond to the set of questions provided; answers should be in a “journal” style, i.e., reflecting back on the experience as best as one can.

There are two important background references for this exercise:

(1) The “Christian Anthropology of the Heart.” The discussion and presentation of the three levels of the “heart” recalls that people experience thoughts, feelings and desires on a surface level, a psychological level and the spiritual level, the “inner heart.” These three are always working together within the people we encounter in the pastoral life.

(2) The “Rules for the Discernment of Spirits” of St. Ignatius Loyola. The Rules are a “map” to answer the question: how does one judge that what is seen in a person’s experience leads toward God or away from God?

In writing your reflections, please cite the number of the specific Rule(s) and name levels of the three hearts that you see operative; also explain your rationale.

These experiences will form the background for the third week of the program in which participants will process these experiences from the pastoral life with fellow program participants and staff.
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Pastoral Situation: Hospital Visit

1. Describe the key facts of the situation.

2. A. What did you see at work in the heart of the person?
B. What were you thinking and feeling?

C. What did you notice God doing in the heart of the person (if you can say)?
3. As you remember the inner dynamics that you saw at work in this situation, what was happening within your heart as a diocesan priest? What was the experience of God’s presence laboring to love you?
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Pastoral Situation: Counseling (marriage, crisis, parental, etc.)

1. Describe the key facts of the situation.

2. A. What did you see at work in the heart of the person(s)?
B. What were you thinking and feeling?

C. What did you notice God doing in the heart of the person(s) (if you can say)?
3. As you remember the inner dynamics that you saw at work in this situation, what was happening within your heart as a diocesan priest? What was the experience of God’s presence laboring to love you?
Pastoral Situation: Preaching

1. Describe the preaching situation (texts, circumstances, etc.).

2. Homily Preparation:

   A. What was your experience of God leading you in your preparation?
Worksheet: Preaching

B. In the course of homily preparation throughout the week, how was God speaking to you in your daily experience of parish life?

3. The experience of preaching itself:
   A. What was I thinking and feeling while preaching?

   B. What was the experience of God laboring to love me as a diocesan priest-preacher?