Proclaim

October, 2025

Discernment <u>Discerning Together</u>

Our life as a Parish Family asks that we discern, and ideally that we consent to becoming more discerning people as we discern.

What is discernment?

At its core, discernment involves ongoing movement deeper into the mystery of God, with the aid of guidance that itself comes from God.

Discernment is a gift, as described by Saint Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians - a gift that we use to identify God's call to us at this time in our history, from among the many good options and ideas before us.

Discernment also has a missionary dimension. It helps us to discover where our gifts, resources, interests and desires meet up with the needs and hungers of the greater Pacific County community in which we live.

Discernment is distinct from collaborative consensus building, prudential decision making, and responding with command authority to emergencies.

Discernment is designed for addressing questions and topics that are foundational in nature.

Discernment is part of the Christian biblical and spiritual tradition. Over the centuries we have identified a kind of spiritual roadmap that outlines the steps to take upon entering discernment. We also know what to look for along the way, and how to welcome and respond to the various thoughts and feelings that emerge.

Welcome, Everyone, to "Proclaim".

Welcome to "Proclaim", a feature brought forth and written by Father David to accompany the life of our Parish Family.

The title "Proclaim" is inspired by the words in Chapter 16 of the Gospel of Mark of going into the world and proclaiming the Gospel to every creature . . .

Articles and features in Proclaim pertain to our Parish Family as a whole, and are published periodically, as needed.

(It's not intended to be a weekly bulletin.)

Again, Welcome to "Proclaim".

Also, discernment leads to the transformation of the person or people involved, above and beyond reflection on the questions at hand. Through the practice of discernment, we find ourselves more and more at greater ease with the skills that accompany discernment. This in turn can support how we live our faith throughout our daily walk and weekly routines.

There are many methods of discernment that have been developed and practiced over the centuries. In our contemporary times, the method taught by Elizabeth Liebert* captures the wisdom of our tradition while offering clear steps that can be followed.

The method of synodality** is also central, particularly when people are called to enter into discernment together as a group. (Synodality comes from the Greek language for "together on the path".) It reminds us of our common Baptism and the special blessings each of us have received for communicating the faith and helping others know something of God's presence. Synodality will be central for us as we bring ourselves into group settings, begin sharing with each other, and start taking note of how we experience the Holy Spirit guiding us forward.

- * Liebert, Elizabeth. The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making. 2008.
- ** Synodality involves listening to each person without interrupting, and offering input freely from one's own heart and experience. Rather than build upon what the previous person has said, I pause for a moment and then offer what I feel inspired to share.

Fr. David

Last April, May, & June 2025

Last spring we invited everyone to our listening sessions in order that we might consider the following questions:

How have your experiences in the parish brought you closer to God? What has been the spiritual impact of your participation in the parish?

If you had to describe the main gifts and charisms of the parish to a newcomer in one sentence, what would you say?

What is your favorite part about being a parishioner? What stands out to you as something to be proud of?

Joy Erickson summarized in writing what was spoken, as part of the official record of our discernment. These records will remain confidential, except as described here: Father David will summarize what was shared, in this edition of Proclaim, on the right-hand side of this page.

In the future, the summary notes will be delivered to our new Parish Family Advisory Council, whose responsibility it will be to spiritually synthesize what everyone has shared and then seek and strive to name the presence of the Holy Spirit within the experience. A summary of this Council work will then be published for everyone in the Family.

Who are the members of the Parish Family Advisory Council? Thus far two people, namely Teri Messineo and Daniel Garcia. We are still at the beginning of forming this group, and are actively seeking additional people who might feel a call to service in this way. More than a consultative group, the Parish Family Advisory Council is to discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit and also assist in the implementation of what is discovered - that is, what will eventually emerge as our "One Parish Plan". Please let Father David, Joy Erickson, or Ymelda Montiel know if you would like to explore in greater depth what service on this new Council might entail. Ps. It will be a big job!

A Couple of Basic Qualifications

Interest in learning about discernment and how to practice it.

Interested and able to travel to our Parish Family churches from time to time.

As A Family ...

Who Are We? What Are Our Gifts?

Something that comes through very clearly is a reminder of the rather obvious - that we are a rural family of parishes. In our particular rural settings, participation in the parish and the surrounding community is woven together as one extended way of life.

Our parishes are places where people connect with God. This connection is experienced in deeper measure in church ministries where families can share the work together with other individuals or other families.

People in our parishes care deeply about each other and are aware and responsive when someone is experiencing distress or, conversely, joy and celebration. At present, this is expressed most powerfully in the Pe Ell and Frances region, where the change in Mass time from Sunday to Saturday has left a painful wound in the hearts of the people who now find themselves bereft of community life and hurting.

From a demographics perspective: our two main languages are English and Spanish; Many among us have multi-generational historical roots in the area; In Long Beach area we have a greater number of people who are relatively new to the family; Our average age is 60+.

[This summary was written by Father David. Future summaries will be written by the Parish Family Advisory Council. See article on the left side of this page for more details.]