

FAITH AND REASON

How to recognize the 'passwords' of the heart: Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning! Let us continue to explore the theme of discernment. Last time we considered prayer, understood as familiarity and confidence with God, as an indispensable element. Prayer, not like parrots, but as familiarity and confidence with God; the prayer of children to their Father; prayer with an open heart. We saw this in the last catechesis. Today I would like, in an almost complementary way, to emphasize that good discernment also requires self-knowledge. Knowing oneself. And this is not easy. Indeed, discernment involves our human faculties: memory, intellect, will, affections. Often, we do not know how to discern because we do not know ourselves well enough, and so we do not know what we really want. You have often heard: "But that person, why doesn't he sort out his life? He has never known what he wants...". Without getting to that extreme, but it happens to us too that we do not know clearly what we want, we do not know ourselves well.

Underlying spiritual doubts and vocational crises, there is — not infrequently — insufficient dialogue between religious life and our human, cognitive and affective dimension. A writer on spirituality noted how many difficulties on the theme of discernment are indicative of problems of another kind, that should be recognized and explored. This author writes: "I have come to the conviction that the greatest obstacle to true discernment (and to real growth in prayer) is not the intangible nature of God, but the fact that we do not know ourselves sufficiently, and do not even want to know ourselves as we really are. Almost all of us hide behind a mask, not only in front of others, but also when we look in the mirror". We all have the temptation to wear a mask, even in front of ourselves.

Forgetting God's presence in our life goes hand in hand with our ignorance of ourselves — ignoring God and ignoring ourselves — ignorance of our personality traits and of our deepest desires.

Knowing oneself is not difficult, but it is laborious: it entails patient soul-searching. It requires the capacity to stop, to "deactivate the autopilot", to acquire awareness of our way of acting, of the feelings that dwell within us, of the recurrent thoughts that condition us, and often unconsciously. It also requires that we distinguish between emotions and spiritual faculties. "I feel" is not the same as "I am convinced"; "I feel like" is not the same as "I want". Thus, we come to recognize that the view we have of ourselves and of reality is at times somewhat distorted. To realize this is a grace! Indeed, very often it can happen that erroneous convictions about reality, based on past experiences, strongly influence us, limiting our freedom to strive for what really matters in our lives.

Living in the computer age, we know how important it is to know passwords in order to get into programs where the most personal and valuable information is stored. But spiritual life, too, has its "passwords": there are words that touch our heart because they refer to what we are most sensitive to. The tempter, that is, the devil, knows these key words well, and it is important that we know them too, so as not to find ourselves where we do not want to be. Temptation does not necessarily suggest bad things, but often haphazard things, presented with excessive importance. In this way it hypnotizes us with the attraction that these things stir in us, things that are beautiful but illusory, that cannot deliver what they promise, and therefore leave us in the end with a sense of emptiness and sadness. That sense of emptiness and sadness is a sign that we have embarked on paths that were not right, that disoriented us. They can be, for example, degrees, careers, relationships, all things that are in themselves praiseworthy, but towards which, if we are not free, we risk harboring unreal expectations, such as confirmation of our worth. For example, when you think of a study you are undertaking, do you think only of promoting yourself, of your own interests, or also to serve the community? There, one can see the intentionality of each one of us. The greatest suffering often comes from this misunderstanding because none of those things can be the guarantee of our dignity.

This is why, dear brothers and sisters, it is important to know ourselves, to know the passwords of our heart, what we are most sensitive to, in order to protect ourselves from those who present themselves with persuasive words to manipulate us, but also to recognize what is truly important for us, distinguishing it from current fads or flashy, superficial slogans. Many times, what is said in a television program, in some advertisement, touches our hearts and makes us go that way without freedom. Be careful about that: am I free, or do I let myself be swayed by the feelings of the moment, or the provocations of the moment?

An aid in this is an examination of conscience, but I am not talking about the examination of conscience that we all do when we go to confession, no. That is: "But I sinned in this, that...". No. A general examination of conscience of the day: what happened in my heart during this day? "Lots of things happened...". Which? Why? What traces did they leave in my heart? Carrying out an examination of conscience, that is, the good habit of calmly rereading what happened during our day, learning to note in our evaluations and choices what we give most importance to, what we are looking for and why, and what we eventually find. Above all, learning to recognize what satisfies my heart. What satisfies my heart? For only the Lord can give us confirmation of what we are worth. He tells us this every day from the cross: he died for us, to show us how precious we are in his eyes. There is no obstacle or failure that can prevent his tender embrace. The examination of conscience helps a great deal, because in this way we see that our heart is not a road where everything passes without us knowing about it. No. To see: what passed by today? What happened? What made me react? What made me sad? What made me joyful? What was bad, and did I harm others? It is about seeing the path our feelings took, the attractions in my heart during the day. Don't forget! The other day we talked about prayer. Today we are talking about self-awareness.

Prayer and self-knowledge enable us to grow in freedom. This is to grow in freedom! These are basic elements of Christian existence, precious elements for finding one's place in life. Thank you... **Pope Francis focusing on the "passwords" of spiritual life, words that reveal what we are most sensitive to.**

As Gentle as Silence: Oh, the love of my Lord is the essence of all that I love here on earth. All the beauty I see God has given to me, and the giving is gentle as silence. Every day, every hour, every moment has been blessed by the strength of God's love. At the turn of each tide God is there at my side, with a touch that is gentle as silence. There've been times when I've turned from your presence, and I've walked other paths, other ways. But I've called on your name in the dark of my shame, and your mercy was gentle as silence.

1 Tm 6:11-16 But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate for the noble confession, to keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ that the blessed and only ruler will make manifest at the proper time, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal power... **Amen.**

Now, man is afraid of death by nature, afraid of the decay of the body. But here is a real startling fact: whoever has put on the faith of the Cross despises even what is naturally dreadful, and for Christ's sake is not afraid of death. So, if anyone is skeptical even now, after so many proofs, and after so many have become martyrs to Christ, and after those who are champions in Christ have shown scorn for death every day—if his mind is still doubtful about whether death has been brought to nothing and come to an end—well, he's right to wonder at such a great thing. But he should not be stubborn in his skepticism, or cynical in the face of what is so obvious. Let him who is skeptical about the victory over death receive the faith of Christ and come over to his teaching. Then he will see how weak death is, and the triumph over it. Many who used to be skeptics and scoffers have later believed, and despised death even enough to become martyrs for Christ himself... **St. Athanasius**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday Do not doubt, do not hesitate, never despair of the mercy of God. Hope and have confidence in confession.
Monday Our body is a cenacle, a monstrosity: through its crystal the world should see God.
Tuesday When we pray, the voice of the heart must be heard more than that proceeding from the mouth.
Wednesday Unfurl the sails, and let God steer us where He will.
Thursday The whole earth is a living icon of the face of God.
Friday None of us is alone in this world. Each of us is a vital piece of the great mosaic of humanity as a whole.
Saturday Trust in God's Providence, interfering – as it always does – for our own good.

Prayer is the duty of every moment. We ought always to pray, said our Lord. And what He said, He did; therein lay His great power. Action accompanied His words and corresponded with them. We must pray always in order to be on our guard. Our life, both of body and soul, our natural and supernatural life, is like a fragile flower. We live surrounded by enemies. Ever since man rejected the Light that was meant to show him the way, everything has become for us an obstacle and a danger; we live in the shadow of death.

When we come into church from the outside our ears are filled with the racket of the city, the words of those who have accompanied us, the laboring and quarreling of our own thoughts, the disquiet of our hearts' wishes and worries, hurts and joys. How are we possibly to hear what God is saying? That we listen at all is something; not everyone does. It is even better when we pay attention and make a real effort to understand what is being said. But all this is not yet the attentive stillness in which God's word can take root. This must be established before the service begins, if possible, in the silence on the way to church, still better in a brief period of composure the evening before... **Msgr. Romano Guardini**

Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. Now we carry this life 'in earthen vessels', and it remains 'hidden with Christ in God'. We are still in our 'earthly tent', subject to suffering, illness, and death. This new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin. The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, who forgave the sins of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health, has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation, even among her own members. This is the purpose of the two sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick... **The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1420-21**

In His Will is Our Peace
Fr. William C. Mooney

Email: Fr.WCmooney@gmail.com

Appointments: (904) 824-6625

Follow on Facebook: [Faith and Reason](#)

Instagram: [faith_and_reason](#)