



## Discernment Steps ONE and TWO

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Commentary by Sister Bridget Waldorf, SSND

Discernment helps us understand what the movements of our inner life mean, where they come from, and where they are leading us. These five discernment steps are a pathway to help us sift through the choices we encounter so that we may, ultimately, grow closer to God.

### 1. LOOK

- **What is your experience of yourself, your gifts, and your talents?**
- **What are the needs in the world...the Church?**

Look around – what is happening in the world, your community, the church? Evangelization, education, immigration, war, divisions, poverty, prisons, disrespect for life, etc. Look within – what are your gifts / desires / talents and what is your experience of yourself? As you look within, what do you see? We bring our whole selves to our discernment – our head, our hearts, and our physical selves. What are your ambitions, your fears, your attractions and your sense of self?

For example, I recall being drawn to an international congregation and saying to myself, “what’s that about?” I didn’t know until I reflected on it a bit more that it had to do with some of the cultural experiences I had as a child. Ask yourself, does any of what I see in the world, the community, the church match up to what I know about what I have to offer or hope to offer those situations? Are there religious congregations involved in serving those particular needs?

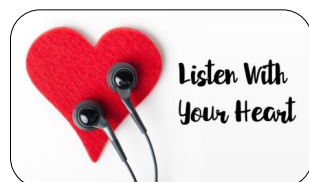


### 2. LISTEN

- **What is your heart telling you? Your friends or mentors?**
- **Do you hear a call, or feel a longing?**

I was struck at a recent vocation event how a number of women religious in the panel noted feeling something strong in their hearts in their own discernment. The heart is amazing – it can break, it can burst, it can long for something, it can weep, it can be attracted to someone or something, it can struggle, it can be tugged, it can be at peace, it can be closed off or it can be filled with giddiness – listen to what your heart is telling you at moments along the way. Do you hear a call? Are you being invited to something?

Listen to your mentors or wise friends – people who know you well, people who will be honest with you, people who understand commitment and want to help you discern God’s will. What are you hearing from them?



Find a spiritual director that can walk with you as you discern God’s invitations. Something that is sort of obvious but needs to be said is this: if we are to listen, we need to find times of quiet. Stillness helps us listen. Where and when are your moments of stillness?

**Next issue:**

**Discernment Steps THREE and FOUR: LEARN and LEAN INTO IT**



**Our Foundress, Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger reminds us:**

“In holy obedience we show in action before God and people what we say so often in words: that we believe in God, love him, and hope in him.”  
*Letter #714, written in 1847*

“Wherever divine providence calls us, there we are most ready to go.”  
*Letter #3623, written in 1864*

**For a list of recommended reading on discernment, visit [ssnd.org/booklist](https://ssnd.org/booklist).**



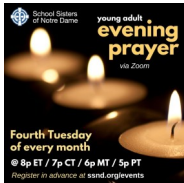
**Scan for back issues and more from SSND**

# Looking ahead

Click each event title to learn more or visit [ssnd.org/events](https://ssnd.org/events).

## Season of Creation

September 1—October 4, 2025



### Young Adult Evening Prayer

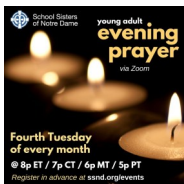
*For young adults ages 18+*

September 23, 2025

8 p.m. ET / 7 p.m. CT

## SSND Foundation Day

October 24, 2025



### Young Adult Evening Prayer

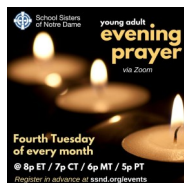
*For young adults ages 18+*

October 28, 2025

8 p.m. ET / 7 p.m. CT

## National Vocation Awareness Week

November 2-8, 2025



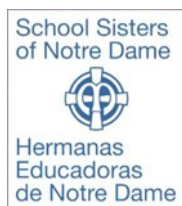
### Young Adult Evening Prayer

*For young adults ages 18+*

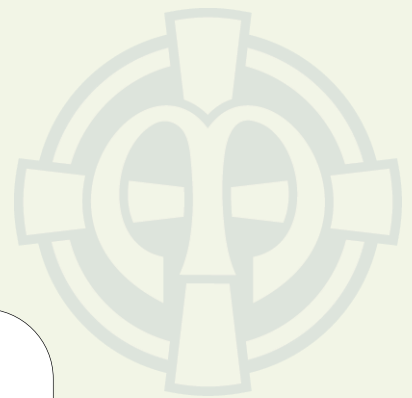
November 25, 2025

8 p.m. ET / 7 p.m. CT

For previous issues of *Vocation Reflections*, visit [ssnd.org/vocationreflections](https://ssnd.org/vocationreflections).



God's cause  
is the *only* concern of  
our hearts  
Blessed Theresa of Jesus  
Cavanaugh



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