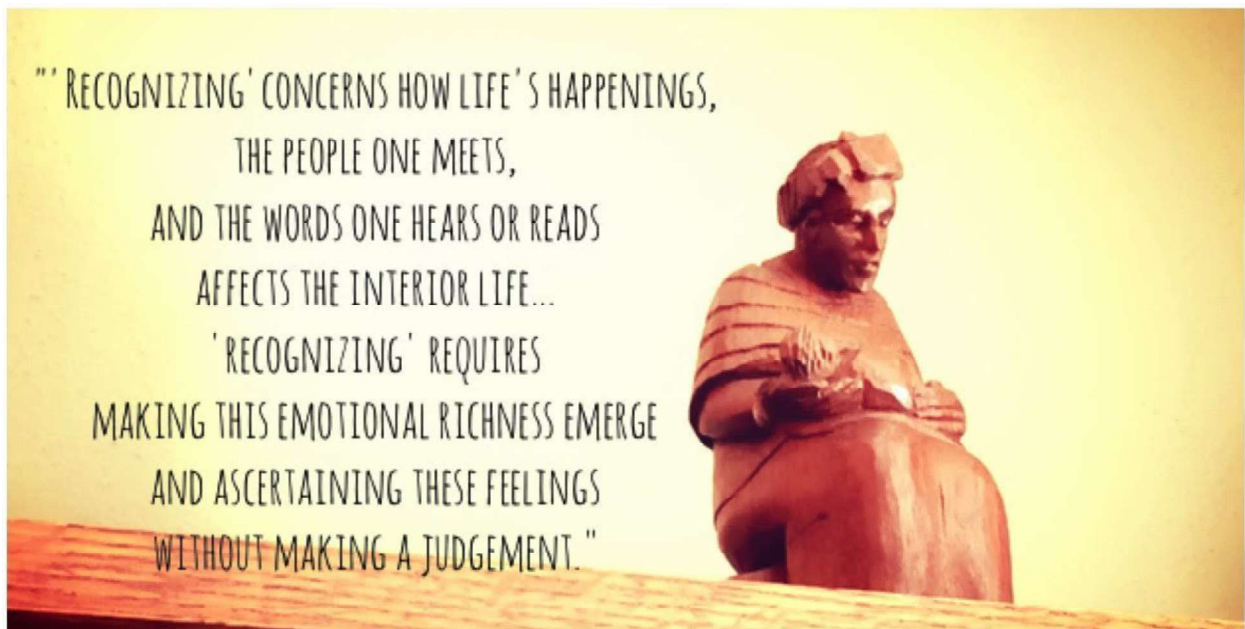


-Week 17-

Recognize: Becoming an Observer of Life's Happenings



The Synod of Bishops'
"Young People, the Faith + Vocational Discernment"
Preparatory Document

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Recognize: Becoming an Observer of Life's Happenings

Last week, we explored “A Process of Vocational Discernment: Recognize, Interpret, Choose,” which invited us to consider three verbs in *Evangelii Gaudium*, 51— “to recognize,” “to interpret” and “to choose”—as a suggested model for a discernment process. We were also invited to reflect on John 2:1-12, the Wedding at Cana, and imagine how Jesus might have applied this model of discernment in his own life. Continuing into this seventeenth week of our Benedictine Volunteers 20-weeks Vocational Discernment Series inspired by the Synod of Bishops’ “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment” Preparatory Document, we explore “Recognize: Becoming an Observer of Life’s Happenings.” Let us recall back to last week’s reflection on the Wedding at Cana, and probe more deeply into to first discernment step, to recognize. When we image ourselves as Jesus, what are we able to recognize through his eyes and heart?

To recognize means to become an observer of the natural unfolding of life’s happenings all around us. By ‘recognizing’ the people, events, words, and feelings around Jesus at the wedding in Cana, we are able to observe a variety to things unfolding at once. The Wedding at Cana is commonly recognized as Jesus’ first miracle. In the events leading up to the wedding, we can see that Jesus is on a several days’ journey after his baptism in Bethany by John the Baptist, who recognizes Jesus as the Son of God. Through baptism, Jesus has been sent forth by God on a special journey. This is the beginning of his public ministry. On the day after his baptism, Jesus meets his first disciples, Simon and Peter, who join him on his journey. On the second day, they journey to Galilee together where they meet Philip and Nathaniel, who also join them. Jesus gains companions along his journey. On the third day, they arrive in Cana, where the wedding takes place. We also see that Jesus mother, Mary, is also in attendance at the wedding. There is no indication of whose wedding it is, but we know that Jesus and the disciples are also invited. As the festivities of the wedding unfolds, the wine starts to run short. Mary comments about this to Jesus and he responds, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.”

It is in Cana that Jesus is presented with a unique opportunity—to discern when is an appropriate time to begin exercising the gifts God has given him. In the step of recognizing, we can try imagining what Jesus might have been feeling internally. Perhaps Jesus was cautious of using his gifts only three days after being sent forth by God. Perhaps Jesus was also afraid to use his gifts and wondered what others might think of him. It also seems that Mary’s words strike something within Jesus, for he responds quite harshly. Perhaps Jesus was upset at Mary for suggesting that he do something he is not yet comfortable with. However, Mary doesn’t seem to be startled by Jesus’ response and asks the servants to listen to Jesus and do what he commands. One can read between the lines and sense Jesus is experiencing an interior struggle.

It is in these spaces of interior struggle that applying the first step—to recognize—can be very helpful. Recognizing helps us to be mindful of what is going on around us and also, mindful of how we feel about these events. In this step, it may also be helpful to observe what the people around us are feeling and saying. For example, Jesus hears in Mary a desire to help others. At this stage, we simply observe what is happening both outside and inside of us. It is helpful to refrain or pause from judgement, as judgement distorts reality. For example, Mary helps Jesus pause judgement by giving him space and silence to process what he is experiencing. In the step of recognizing, it is most important to allow room for all emotions to emerge and to feel and listen to each of them gently.

Questions for Reflection:

- Recall a situation in your life when you had to make an important decision. It is helpful if this situation is one you have had some distance from. What was happening around you? Consider events, people, and words you heard or read.
- What feelings surfaced for you in relationship to these? Did you experience an interior struggle like Jesus did? Did judgements surface for you?
- Looking back on this situation today, is there any new or different information you have about what happened?