

DISCERNMENT

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FINDING THE WILL OF God

Intent of the fable

- ✓ *To help us to read the signs of the times.*
- ✓ *To discover our attachments and emotional blocks that vitiate our discerning God's will..*
- ✓ *To realize that often the reasons we bring to justify our decisions are rationalizations*
- ✓ *To be aware of the inner promptings of our nature and the movements of Gods grace within us.*

THE SWALLOWS

Narrator: On a tree by a river, a group of Swallows perched. And as they fluttered from branch to branch, they chirped....

Swallows: How short the days are now. Don't you find it getting colder? These grey skies make life so dull. Where is the sun shining now? All the flowers withered away! All the leaves are falling.

Narrator: All the signs in nature seemed to say "something" to the Swallows, as if they whispered to them: It is time for you to leave this place. Yes begin your journey immediately. Nature was beckoning the swallows to a far away distant land with brighter skies and warmer days with shorter nights. How they longed for the evergreen trees and the delightful scent of flowers! There was haven, there, they must go. All, but one wise swallow decided to make haven where she was. She argued with her companions:

Wise Swallow: But why do we have to go? Do you expect me to find anything very different from here?

Swallows: Are you not coming with us?

Wise Swallow: Where to...where do you want to go?

Swallows: To a warmer place where we can nest.

Wise Swallow: And how far is that place from here?

Swallows: Come along, we have not much time left, you'll see.

Wise Swallow: Surely, you can't expect me to leave my beautiful nest I have made here.

Swallows: Just leave everything behind, and come with us before its' too late.

Wise Swallow: Too late? For what?

Narrator: She was a wise Swallow. She wouldn't make a move until she had thought it over once, twice and again and again. In a final bid the Swallows urged their stubborn companion.

Swallow: Let's be up and gone! Let's not linger here any longer. Deep down within us we feel a call an urge to leave this place and go. Our hearts keep telling us "Go, Go, Go!"

Narrator: However, the most sensible among them refused to budge. She stayed put where she was. She scorned her companions:

Wise Swallow: I will not go from here till you can convince me! Really you are bunch of irrational creatures. First, to risk so much as leaving behind all you have here. Then, to go where you know not and next for no reason at all!.

Narrator: Entrusting themselves to their inner voices and surrendering themselves to the promptings of their nature, all the Swallows left the presently inhospitable country for a more friendly land. All, but the exceptionally, rational and calculating, swallow remained behind. She kept telling herself:

Wise Swallow: It's madness I say. To trust my inner feelings, without having a solid reason first! Don't you think that makes sense?

Narrator: As she nestled in her comfy home she kept reasoning out and convincing herself of her position.

Wise Swallow: I know what to do. Why do we have to fly away like cowards? Cannot we stay put here and fight it out.

Narrator: She figured it out, all right, from the start.

Wise Swallow: It's getting cold, no sun now, winter's days are advancing. So I must plan ahead.

Narrator: She went all round collecting feathers and pieces of wool to insulate her nest and make it warmer and more inhabitable. She muttered to herself:

Wise Swallow: Winter is cruel. I must keep really warm. This nest will shelter me for the rest of my winter days no matter what the weather.

Narrator: She was proud of her new re-feathered nest. She felt very cozy and warm. She kept telling herself:

Wise Swallow: How nice I feel inside here! Couldn't all have done the same? If they only had waited! That's what you call stupid and irrational and to think that now they are flying and flying, tired, exhausted and hungry, and without knowing where they go.

Narrator: She chuckled with laughter at the rest of her friends. The dreadful winter crept in, step by step. The days became still shorter and the nights longer. The winds grew stronger and the air cooler. The landscape was desolate. Still our Swallow was feeling warm and cozy in her beautiful nest! She thought she was saved from the clutches of winter, till snow began gently falling, covering the whole countryside with a spotless mantle of ice. There was nothing to eat, not a grain, not a crumb. She was hungry now, growing weaker and weaker. Feathers and bones was all that was left as life ebbed away...until one day she was no more.

Her beautiful and cozy nest had become her grave. Winter passed over and once again the days grew longer and warmer, and flowers anew decked the countryside with color. Crickets and grasshoppers filled the air with sound and song and... oh wonder of wonders....

Those 'stupid and irrational' creatures who entrusted themselves to their inner voices and surrendered themselves to the promptings of their nature appeared again in the warmer skies of summer filling them with songs and dance!

Happy days were there again for them. It was good for them to be backing home. Everything was alive again, but for that little 'rational' Swallow who shrunk and withered lay dead in the heart of her cozy nest!

THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION

What Do We Mean by Discernment

- Discernment means an honest and loving search for the will of God.
- We strive to discover the will of God "objectively" independently from our likes and dislikes, our personal attachments, moods and whims.
- Discernment is a laborious and often a long process whereby we strive to ascertain the plans God has for us.
- Discernment has nothing to do with "choosing" the Will of God.
- We choose nothing. It is He who chooses. We have to accept whatever God has chosen for us.
- It is God who decides what he wants of us.

- Even before the world was created, God had already decided it for us. Our job is to find out what it is and how to carry it out!
- Discernment does not imply that we should see in advance before hand, the entire plan God has for us
- In advance, only God knows his entire plan for us. We have to accept it as it unfolds before us, day by day, .step by step,
- Discernment demands that we get continuously attuned, in the here and now, to God’s messages and inspirations and that we put them into action in our day-to-day living!

Dispositions Wanted for a Good

Discernment

- **A genuine love for God.** To love God above all things and persons.
- **Great generosity.** A readiness to sacrifice everything, everyone, even oneself for the sake of God. .
- **Trust and confidence in God:** Placing oneself completely in Gods hands.
- **Forgoing all security** except the security that comes from trusting in God.
- **Courage to “acceptance Gods acceptance”**
- **Refusing to ask God guarantees** and safeguards.
- **Not putting conditions** to God..
- **Detachment**, understood as an interior freedom from “inordinate attachments” to persons, things and self.



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Certitude, Risks and Trust

- It’s not possible, through discernment, to arrive at a “metaphysical” or “mathematical” certitude of having found the will of God.
- God’s will cannot be discerned mathematically, syllogistically or apodictically..
- We can only arrive at a “moral” and “spiritual” certitude.
- The very words “absolute certitude” in regard to the will of God is a figure of speech, for God is a mystery and his Will for us cannot be otherwise..
- By human reasoning, we cannot decide in a “positive” way, what the will of God is
- No amount of “reasoning” will ever show to anyone whether he has to embrace celibacy or not, leave his home and forgo his possessions or not.
- Human reason guides us only in a “negative” way. In other words, it can indicate to us that our choice is not unreasonable..
- For instance, our reason may tell us whether the things we have discerned as the will of God are moral or immoral, wise or unwise, contrary to the Gospel or against charity. If they are immoral or

unwise or contrary to the Gospel, we can conclude that they are not the will of God.

- Celibacy, absolute dedication, renunciation, poverty, dying for others, etc, do not make sense to human reason, but they do to a generous and godly “heart”
- The heart has logic of its own! Discernment in the spiritual sense is a matter of the heart.
- The reasons of the heart cannot be expressed in a “rational” way. Yet, they are not unreasonable..
- The logic of the heart, the promptings of the spirit do not contradict reason, yet they transcend it!
- When we enter into the process of discernment we are expected not to be unreasonable, yet we have to follow the “logic of the heart”
- In practice, the most important decisions of our lives are taken with our hearts, yet they should not contradict reason.
- No amount of cerebration can tell us whether we should marry or not, marry this man or that woman or rather another; whether to embrace celibacy or not, whether to stake our life for a noble cause or not.
- When confronted with such issues our reason remains mum. It is the heart that speaks.