

Before I tell my life what I  
*want to do* with it,  
I must *listen*  
to my life  
telling me *who I am.*  
Parker Palmer



# A Discernment Retreat

## *Facilitator Guide*

From  
**Service to**  
**Sisterhood**



# Day 1 Schedule

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Theme</i>   | <i>Grouping</i> | <i>Details</i>   |
|-------------|--|-----------------|--|
| 9:00 am     | Welcome  | Whole group     | <p>“Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.” Parker Palmer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we listen to our lives? What are we listening for? Why do we listen? Are we on our own listening or can others listen with us?</li> <li>• Our time together this weekend is to open some space for these questions, to lean into this invitation to listen to our lives.</li> <li>• St. Irenaeus, a second century bishop Asia Minor, once wrote, “The glory of God is the human person fully alive.” God desires us to be fully alive, to live life fully. God’s love finds expression in us, and the more we are able to live fully flourishing lives, the freer God’s love can act in and through us. That is our vocation, our calling...to be fully alive, to be love in our world.</li> <li>• We gather this weekend to explore how we can most fully live and love, how we can best come alive to love in our life. God’s deepest desire is for our happiness. There are many ways we can find happiness and there are many ways we can love. Our discernment calls us to listen deeply to our experience, our life and let that speak to us.</li> <li>• Chances are you have been doing this already and you will continue to do it after you leave the Cenacle. The beauty is that we have a community gathered here this weekend to listen with us. You’ll have some space, learn some tools for listening deeply, and build some friendships that will help you as you continue to discern.</li> <li>• Overview of hopes</li> </ul> |
| 9:30 am     | Morning prayer<br><b>Booklet p.2</b>                     | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to Live the Story</li> <li>• After the Psalm, invite people to share any line from the song or the Psalm that spoke to them.</li> </ul>   |
| 9:50 am     | Sharing our stories /<br>Lifeline<br><b>Booklet p. 4</b> | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is our life teaching us about love? Where do we feel most alive? What leaves us feeling empty? When have we experienced a depth of joy, perhaps even in the midst of pain?</li> <li>• The experience of love, being loved and being love in the life of another, is a way we encounter our vocation. A helpful question to ask when discerning our vocational lifestyle is, “What way of living my life helps me to become more loving?”</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">&gt;&gt; <b>Cont.</b></p>  |

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| 9:50 am     | Sharing our stories /<br>Lifeline<br><b>Booklet p. 4</b> | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parker Palmer, a wise Quaker teacher, wrote, “Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice “out there” calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice ‘in here’ calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God.”</li> <li>• To begin our retreat, I invite you to listen to your life in the key of LOVE. How have you experienced being loved and being love?</li> <li>• Introduce the Life Line activity (<b>In booklet</b>)</li> </ul>  |
| 10:00 am    | Reflection<br><b>Booklet p. 4</b>                        | Individual      | Spend 20-30 minutes completing the reflection.  |
| 10:20 am    | Reflection<br><b>Booklet p. 4</b>                        | Small group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pick one or two events from your reflection to share in a small group.</li> <li>• Listen to the other people in your group share. Are there similar themes that arise?</li> </ul>  |
| 10:50 am    | Reflection<br><b>Booklet p. 4</b>                        | Whole group     | Come back together and share observations from your sharing.  |
| 11:00 am    | Overview   | Whole group     | <p>“Unlike the commandments of the moral law, which are meant to mark the floor below which love should never fall, vocation has to do with the wide open space above. Love has no ceiling, and so my vocation is, quite simply, the way I will rise. Yet, like picking a point on to dome of the sky, there are an infinite number of ways up. So what will be my unique way of responding to God’s loving call? What will be the transcendent trajectory of my life?”</p> <p>It is this understanding of vocation we will explore this morning.</p>   |
|             | God calls...<br><b>Booklet p. 6</b>                      | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edward Hahnenberg reminds us that “No matter how much it flows through me and is part of me, my vocation originates beyond me. The summons comes from without. It is God who calls.” I think it is easy to slip into thinking that vocation is all about me figuring out how I want to live my life. But as people of faith, our vocational discernment “takes shape as a response. So, we turn to the source of the call.”</li> <li>• When thinking about discerning how God desires to love through us, our vocation, we can sometimes think about it as God’s got a plan for us and we just have to discover...kind of like divine hide and seek. Instead of asking, What is the plan of God? we ought to ask, Who is the God of the plan?</li> </ul> |

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| 11:15 am    | God calls...<br><b>Booklet p. 6</b> | Individual      | <p>Journal time: <b>Booklet p. 6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has your image of God changed since your childhood?</li> <li>• What is revealed about who God is through Jesus, the human face of God?</li> </ul>   |
| 11:25 am    | God calls...<br><b>Booklet p. 6</b> | Whole Group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share any insights from your reflection.</li> <li>• “The summons comes from without. It is God who calls.” Knowing this helps us to see that ‘a calling’ is very different than ‘a choice.’</li> <li>• Where do we “find God drawing us toward the meaning of our lives?” It is a dance, deeply intertwined realities. God and me. Grace and nature.</li> <li>• In his book <i>Awakening Vocation</i>, Edward Hahnenberg draws on the work of various theologians to examine vocation. Karl Barth, a 20th century Swiss Protestant theologian, asked two basic questions when considering criteria for judging faithfulness to the divine summons in choosing a vocation.<br/><br/>First, what are the needs of my particular historical situation? It is not enough for a possible career or life choice to appear interesting or enticing. It must also meet a genuine need and offer a real service.<br/><br/>Second, what are my own gifts and dispositions? I am constituted by God in a certain way...God alone is the one who gives these voices authority. We must listen to these voices, but we must obey only the voice of God... God calls us with the gifts we have, but God can also call us beyond our abilities.”</li> </ul> |
| 11:45 am    | ...me...<br><b>Booklet p. 7</b>     | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation begins with God, but it does not end there. Remember, it is a dance. God initiates the dance, but God needs a dance partner. Vocation springs from grace, but that grace needs a place to take root. As we looked at who the God of the plan is, we deepened our understanding of God as a God of love who is in relationship with us. God is constantly drawing us to embody God in our lives, in our world. “Any individual vocation falls within the broader purpose of God, the God of Jesus Christ, the God of love and concern.”</li> <li>• Edward Hahnenberg explored Karl Rahner’s understanding of vocation. Rahner was a 20th century Jesuit theologian, considered</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">&gt;&gt; <b>Cont.</b></p>  |

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| 11:45 am    | ...me...<br><b>Booklet p. 7</b>             | Whole group     | by many as one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century. “For Rahner, the key to vocational discernment is for each of us to grow more conscious of this transcendent presence within ourselves, to sink more deeply into it. The result is that each of us comes to understand ourselves more fully, and to make important decisions more freely.”  |
| 12:00 pm    | ...me...<br><b>Booklet p. 7</b>             | Individual      | Journal time: <b>Booklet p. 7</b><br><br>A way to understand ourselves more fully is to look at where our hearts are moved, what brings us joy, how we bring joy to others.<br><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where/when is my heart moved?</li> <li>• What brings me deep joy?</li> <li>• What in me brings joy to others?</li> </ul>  |
| 12:10 pm    | ...me...<br><b>Booklet p. 7</b>             | Whole group     | “If we are meant to respond to a particular call, we have got to be able to hear it.”<br><br>A commitment to prayer is essential for discerning vocation. If we do not make the space to get to know the God who calls, to understand ourselves more deeply, we will find it difficult if not impossible to awaken to our vocation.<br><br>“For Rahner, God reveals God’s particular will through a kind of individual “inspiration” that falls somewhere in between miraculous intervention and rational deduction. It is a kind of communication more concrete than general norms but more ambiguous than a vision. It is more like a “sense” or an “awareness” of something that is both within us and beyond us.”   |
| 12:30 pm    | <b>LUNCH</b>                                |                 | <b>Take time to reflect on the morning.</b>   |
| 2:00 pm     | ...through others...<br><b>Booklet p. 8</b> | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God calls me. If we try to discern our vocation alone, it becomes ‘a distracting echo chamber’ because our lives are essentially communal. Discovering our vocation happens in community. God calls me through others. We discover so much about ourselves through the people in our lives. They can offer us insights and reflect back to us what they hear us saying.</li> <li>• God calls us through others who inspire us, who challenge us to be more loving, to authentic conversion. Hahnenberg reminds us that “Without conversion and ongoing transformation, it is all too easy to confuse who God wants me to be with who I want me to be.” Sometimes I can think too small. Conversion and transformation broaden my world.</li> </ul> |

# Day 1 Schedule

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Theme</i>                                 | <i>Grouping</i> | <i>Details</i>   |
|-------------|--|-----------------|--|
| 2:10 pm     | ...through others...<br><b>Booklet p. 8</b>  | Individual      | Journal time: <b>Booklet p. 8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the people in your life who have helped to shape you into the person you are today?</li> <li>• Who shaped you during your year of service?</li> <li>• Who inspires you?</li> </ul>  |
| 2:20 pm     | ... for others.<br><b>Booklet p. 9</b>       | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite people to share from their journal time and conversation.</li> <li>• We discover our vocations in response to the world. Our vocation connects us to the world around us, points us outward.</li> <li>• Invite the group to listen and pray with Lori True's song "Make me an Instrument of Peace"</li> </ul>  |
| 2:30 pm     | ... for others.<br><b>Booklet p. 9</b>       | Individual      | Journal time: <b>Booklet p. 9</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your service experience, when do you experience being an instrument of God in the lives of others?</li> <li>• What did that experience teach you about yourself?</li> <li>• What helped you to be this open space for God's love?</li> </ul>   |
| 2:45 pm     | Conclusion<br><b>Booklet p. 10</b>           | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We've spent time exploring vocation understood as our response to God's loving call. As Hahnenberg reminded us, "Unlike the commandments of the moral law, which are meant to mark the floor below which love should never fall, vocation has to do with the wide open space above. Love has no ceiling, and so my vocation is, quite simply, the way I will rise. Yet, like picking a point on to dome of the sky, there are an infinite number of ways up. So what will be my unique way of responding to God's loving call? What will be the transcendent trajectory of my life?"</li> <li>• We come to see that God calls me through others for others. As we cultivate a listening heart, we become freer and freer to respond to God's call. We hear it in the longings of hearts, in the cries of those suffering at the margins of our society, in our Church seeking to be a credible witness to the Gospel of Jesus.</li> </ul> |
| 3:00 pm     | Intro to prayer time<br><b>Booklet p. 12</b> | Whole group     | <p>How do I cultivate this kind of listening heart?</p> <p>There are many ways to pray that open our hearts and make them more attentive. This afternoon you will have some time for quiet prayer. You can go back over anything we've looked at in our time together, you can explore some scripture, or you can simply be in the beauty of this space, for God speaks brilliantly through creation, the first revelation of God.</p>   |

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|----------------|---|-----------------|--|
| 4:00 pm        | Free time                               |                 | Time for individual prayer or one-on-one conversation.   |
| <b>6:00 pm</b> | <b>DINNER</b>                           |                 |  |
| 7:00 pm        | Process the day<br><b>Booklet p. 15</b> | World Café      | The World Café will help to process the experience of the day and allow for more in depth sharing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Round One:</li> <li>• Round Two:</li> <li>• Round Three:</li> </ul>  |
| 8:30 pm        | Night prayer<br><b>Booklet p. 16</b>    | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End the day inviting Christ into our journey, inviting deeper listening, inviting courageous response</li> <li>• “Christ in Me Arise”</li> <li>• After the Psalm, invite people to share any line from the song or the Psalm that spoke to them.</li> </ul> |

## Day 2 Schedule

| <i>Time</i>     | <i>Theme</i>                                  | <i>Grouping</i> | <i>Details</i>  |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|
| 9:00 am         | Morning prayer<br><b>Booklet p. 18</b>        | Whole group     | “Lord, You Are in This Place” and Lectio <b>Booklet p. 20</b>   |
| 9:15 am         | Religious life<br><b>Booklet p. 22</b>        | Whole group     | <p>Introduce the Transformative Elements from LCWR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pick one or two that you find most compelling</li> <li>• Share with the group</li> <li>• The presence of our volunteers over the years has helped religious live into these transformative elements and continues to help transform us.</li> <li>• There is still much to be done to create a just and loving world; God is still calling some to a life of radical sharing of resources, deep communal listening, and all-inclusive loving.</li> </ul> |
| 10:00 am        | Mass  | Whole group     |   |
| 11:00 am        | Tools for discernment<br><b>Booklet p. 24</b> | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This weekend was an invitation to understand a bit more how God invites us to be fully alive by listening deeply to our lives.</li> <li>• Discernment is a skill we can cultivate. It is helpful to have a community or at least one other person to discern with.</li> <li>• Here are some tips on how to discern your vocation to a particular lifestyle. Perhaps the most important part of discerning well is to cultivate your life of prayer.</li> </ul>   |
| 12:00 pm        | Sending prayer<br><b>Booklet p. 24</b>        | Whole group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End the retreat with a sending forth. We leave this place but our journey continues. We remember that our God of compassion and love always journeys with us.</li> <li>• “We Are Called”</li> <li>• After the poem “Passover Remembered,” invite people to share any line from the song or poem that spoke to them.</li> <li>• At the end of the prayer, invite all to a sign of peace and a promise of prayer.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>12:30 pm</b> | <b>LUNCH</b>                                  |                 |   |