

Journey of Faith



Making Tough Decisions

Tomás didn't know what to do. He'd promised his grandpa he'd work at his store after school. But as he was leaving, one of his friends asked him to come play soccer.

"Tomás!" his friend whined. "We need you on our team. Without you, we'll lose. You have to play!"

Tomás knew he'd made a promise to his grandpa, but his friends needed him, too. Tomás didn't want to break a promise to his grandpa, but he also didn't want to let his friends down.





What would you tell Tomás to do? Why?

How do you make difficult decisions?

Making Difficult Decisions

It's not always easy to make decisions. Making a choice between one thing and another is called **discernment**. Discernment means "choosing the right way." Saint Ignatius Loyola created a step-by-step process to help people make good choices. As you go through each step, think about what Tomás should decide or think of a decision you have to make.



Step 1

State your problem clearly and ask God for help.

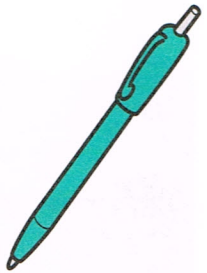
Before you can make a decision, you have to know what you're deciding. Think about what's going on. Then clearly state what you're trying to decide. You can say it out loud or write it down. Once you have that, pray for God to guide you as you decide. God will guide you through every step.

Write out your problem below. Then say a short prayer, offering your problem to God.

Step 2

List the pros and cons of each decision.

Make a list for each choice you might make. Think about how each choice will affect your life. Recognize the good things (pros) that can come from your choice. Think about the problems (cons) that might arise. You might also want to talk to someone you trust who isn't involved. They might be able to see things about the decision you can't.



Write down the pros and cons of each choice.

PROS	CONS

Step 3

Talk to God about your list.

Sometimes the choice we want isn't the right choice. That's why, before we make a decision, we ask God. Talk to God about your list and your possible choices. Then just listen. Don't think about making a decision. Keep your heart and mind open to what God is trying to tell you.

It can be hard to give up what we want in order to do what God wants. That's why we make sure to talk to God about all our big decisions. If you aren't sure where to start, pray the Lord's Prayer. Pause after you say "thy kingdom come, thy will be done."

Step 4

Make your decision.

Pray until you feel you know the best decision.

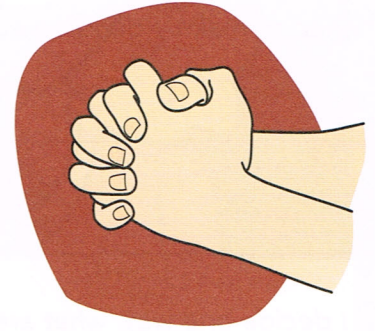


Think back to the problem you wrote in step one. What choice do you think God would want you to make?

Step 5

Reflect on that decision.

Now you know what you're going to do. Take it to God in prayer one more time. Think about what might change after you make this decision. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you courage to follow through with your choice.



Step 6

Make your decision final.

Now you actually have to make your decision official. Doing the right thing may not always make you happy. You may feel disappointed because you're missing out on doing something with your friends. Or it may mean admitting you did something wrong. That's OK.

The right thing isn't always what makes us happiest in the moment. It's what makes us closer to God.

Think about your problem from step one. Write down what your final decision should be.



TOUGH CHOICES

Now use this process on your own. Write it down in a special place. You don't have to share it with anyone if you don't want to. Remember to keep talking to God as you go through each step.

1. I need to make a decision about...

2. If I decide one way, what are the...

...good things that can happen?

...bad things that can happen?

3. If I decide the other way, what are the...

...good things that can happen?

...bad things that can happen?

4. Write your own prayer to God about your decision.

Now that you have used this way to make a decision, which step is the hardest for you?

In Short



- Spiritual discernment is a decision-making process in which we seek God's will.
- Saint Ignatius of Loyola offers a step-by-step discernment process.
- Discernment plays a large part in our spiritual growth and faith journey.

Journey of Faith for Children, Mystagogy, M4 (826382)

Imprimi Potest: Stephen T. Rehrauer, CSsR, Provincial, Denver Province, the Redemptorists.

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Design and production: Wendy Barnes, Lorena Mitre Jimenez, John Krus, and Bill Townsend. Illustration: Jeff Albrecht.

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Printed in the United States of America. 21 20 19 18 17 / 5 4 3 2 1. Third Edition.