COORDINATING COUNCIL

*Please use Doris Klein's article as part of your individual discernment process for the models of governance.*

**Standing in Decision**

At one time or another, we have all stood in the awkward, messy in-between place where, faced with decisions and choices, we long for clarity. In that place, we attempt to find answers by putting situations in opposing positions, as if we could simply say:" this is the right way and that is the wrong way. "Rather, we are challenged to be faithful to the process of holding the larger truths while listening to the voice of integrity within.

Too often, we slip into the dualistic belief that there is a distinct either/or way of splitting complex choices into two opposing ideas. The comparative stance finds us believing that one excludes the other, assuming an "all or nothing" attitude that traps within it the information we really need for discernment. We construct air-tight compartments into which we neatly try to isolate all the pieces of information, hoping that the structure will clarify the decision.

When trying to make difficult choices, we often begin by gathering factual information and making lists to substantiate the advantage of one alternative over the others. In addition, we seek input from the "authorities" around us, certain that trusted and respected others will tell us what to do or at least affirm our choice. So often in the process, we fail, or perhaps fear, to trust the wisdom of our own intuition.

Discernment is an invitation to be attentive to the voices of our deep inner knowing. It demands time to quiet the outer noises and listen to our heart and our body which, when we walk in integrity, will tell the truth, even a truth we may not want to hear. To listen within, we must breathe into the sacred connection we have with the holy One, asking to be still and attentive. The process demands a discipline as we repeatedly quiet the thoughts, judgements, and fears that bubble so quickly in our minds. Gently but firmly, as if guiding a young child, we must hush the hounding of our head and descend into the cave of our heart.

This place of knowing speaks a language that is often wordless. As we sit with our options, we will find that images and feelings unfold, bringing us vital information. " What do I feel in my body when I hold each choice? What are the

emotions that wash through me? If I could really do what I wanted, what would that be like? What image comes to my mind as I picture myself in the various options?" As we ask our own questions, whatever they may be, we slowly pull aside the debris that traps our energy and insight here in the in-between place.

At times, the blending of the intuitive and the linear information bursts forth with a clarity that almost tips us over-and at that moment, we just *know*! It's simple, clear choice that resonates with integrity through our entire being. And, although we may have difficulty verbalizing or translating the clarity to others, we know in our heart what we must do, and we begin again.

At other times, however, we become paralyzed by fear and feel cemented in this awkward in-between place for what seems like an eternity. We feel overwhelmed with what we can't seem to figure out. Our first challenge in these stuck moments is to breathe. Even though the chaos and confusion are deafening. Wisdom walks with us here as we simply wait to know. Perhaps this decision has a longer gestation time that we would like, and perhaps the process will invite us to walk new paths we have never before considered. Sometimes, however, the decision is *not* to decide, and we continue walking, carrying our options.

Sadly, our linear minds often deem the shortest and most direct route as the best, yet it serves us well to recount the insights and gifts gained in the round-about way we may have to take. For example, there may be times when we recognize the need to reconsider to retrace our steps, to revisit the questions, so that we can learn even more about ourselves and our options. Rather than fall into the trap of judging our decision harshly perhaps we need to give thanks for what we have discovered in a process that winds and overlaps upon itself.

In the end, we may uncover choices or answers that we'd rather deny, running from what we know is true. Perhaps we had hoped for a different solution, something easier, something more pleasant, something less disruptive of our life or the lives of those around us. Acting with integrity demands courage as we ask to be faithful to the truth we have minded in this deep discovery, praying to act wisely and walk mindfully along this ever-unfolding path.

Finally, we must not limit the term discernment to those major life choices, forgetting the daily decisions that invite and challenge us to be attentive to the voice within. Mindful of the multiple times we strive to hear the call of the Holy, we ask simply to be attentive to the many ways God speaks, as we slowly and patiently listen with our whole being for the whispers that lead us.

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