

## THE FIFTH FLOWER: DISCERNMENT

The bouquet of flowers is becoming more colorful and more beautiful. The different flowers are making an impact on me and whoever is around me. The fragrance is more powerful and the colors are getting more intense and enticing, attracting non-believers to the faith.

This reaction has its influence on me as well. My dedication has to be increased and my commitment has to become more effective. My “EGO = Edging God Out”<sup>1</sup> has to be diminished, if it cannot be annulled, for the growing of my “IntiMaCy = into me see”<sup>2</sup> with God; people will be able to see God through my intimate relationship with Him, and I can see God in them as well. This intimate relationship is evolving as an act of grace when I made my body, my person, a sacred place for the Holy Spirit.

The fourth flower, endurance, is the gift of the Christian discipline in which the person can exercise and mold his will according to and after the likeness of God through the help of the Holy Spirit. This continuous discipline will flourish a disciple, who can perform greater things than his Master: “anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these.”<sup>3</sup>

This fourth flower brought to me a fifth one, the discernment flower. Another great gift to which I must live up. To discern, in some cases, is to judge and to take action. Here is the dilemma. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were endowed upon me, gave me the insight to know what is in the hearts of the people<sup>4</sup> and therefore, I became a judge must react according to his discipleship correcting what is wrong.

Who am I, O my Lord, to become a judge? This flower is my temptation. My weakness could lead me to the “EGO” and therefore, my condemnation, or it could lead me to the ultimate “INTIMACY” of our relationship which is my salvation.

First of all, with discernment, I should know what is in my heart first and to judge myself before I judge others. Herein lies my attachment to your teachings that allow me to

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Rossi.

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<sup>3</sup> John 14: 12.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 5: 13.

discern between following You and going after earthly cares. Here is where I test my belonging and my commitment. Do I belong to you or to myself?

This gift, O Lord, is a detecting flower that will enable me to stay alert and vigilant to respond to your commandment enduring all difficulties for my sake and for your glory. While discrimination, discernment, is understood through visible differences between colors, races and physical forms, the philokalic fathers have understood and experienced discrimination and discernment through invisible thoughts and spirits. They consider discrimination as “the greatest gift of God’s grace.”<sup>5</sup> It is “the gift of the Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:11)

Discrimination is the virtue that keeps me “from being harmed by the nets of the devil and his deceit.”<sup>6</sup> It is the gift of discern between fantasies and visions. It is the gift to differentiate between what is true and real, to what is false and vice. In such discrimination, I learn to “walk along the royal road, swerving neither to the right through immoderate self-control, nor to the left through indifference and laxity.”<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, discrimination is the lantern that guides me through the divine path to the divine. It is the eye that sees the needle’s eye<sup>8</sup> and goes through it in a straight path for if it does not enter, it will fall away in the grandiose of the deceits of evil.

I should do nothing without discrimination for no virtue can stand or remain firm without its application. Jean Cassian says: “Wisdom, intellection and perceptiveness are united in discrimination; and without these our inner house cannot be built, nor can we gather spiritual growth.”<sup>9</sup> But this discrimination should gush out from true humility and not from the knowledge of the self itself. It is not the result of our own judgment but the fruit of trust in God and his knowledge through the teachings of the Church.

I should make every effort to guard the gift of discernment “which keeps us from the excess” of the extremes, for discernment is the true gift of guidance that will keep me focused and bewildered.

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<sup>5</sup> Philokalia I, John Cassian p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 19: 24, Mark 10: 25 and Luke 18: 25.

<sup>9</sup> Philokalia I, John Cassian, p. 100.

Thus discernment is the gift of guidance and illumination that through its application the sands of my desert will be formed by the hands of God in His Image and likeness and His kingdom is established on its soil.