



Dear Sister or Brother in Christ,

We are grateful that you have decided to familiarize yourself with the process of discernment in the Diocese of Southeast Florida. Discernment is a way of listening for God's voice with the Church as we experience the call of God within the Church and world. Regardless of our current place in life, when we begin to experience God tugging on our heart for greater ministry, the feeling can be simultaneously exciting and nerve-wracking. Know that you are always supported and loved in prayer by your parish, parish priest, and greater diocesan community throughout this process as you seek to understand the most appropriate way for us to serve.

The diocese has created a process that is meant to help you nurture your life in response to the Baptismal Covenant through active discernment with your local priest and a team of fellow parishioners. We believe that everyone is called by God in baptism to ministries within God's Church. The question is not whether you are called, but to what? We hope that the initial steps of this process will aid you and your community in beginning to understand your gifts so that you and the Church may discern where your gifts may best be used for the mission and ministry of the Gospel.

The process of discernment to leadership in this diocese follows three broad steps:

1. **Congregational Discernment.** This is where you will meet with your priest and a spiritual director for about one year. Following these meetings, your priest will assist you in forming a Congregational Discernment Team (CDT) to more clearly discern God's call. For many who are called to lay ministry, this will be the conclusion of the discernment process as the individual begins to exercise his or her leadership in ministry.
2. **Discernment Retreat.** This is where you will meet with the Bishop and the Discernment Team after having completed the congregational discernment work in your parish. At the retreat there will be further discernment about the direction of formation. Some candidates will be recommended for formation for ordination, while others will be affirmed in their ministries as laypeople.
3. **Formation.** After the Discernment Retreat, the Commission on Ministry will recommend to the Bishop a formation program that includes academic and spiritual formation.

The first step is for you to contact your priest and begin a conversation with him or her about your experience. He or she will help you find a spiritual director, if you do not already have one, and in due course will discuss whether forming a CDT is the best next step for you in understanding and responding to your life as a baptized Christian. May God bless you along this important journey as we seek to build God's kingdom.

Peace,

The Commission on Ministry

The Rev. Dr. Sanford Groff, The Rev. Leslie Hague, The Venerable Hal Hurley, Co-chairs