

CRITERIA AND METHOD FOR DISCERNMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

CRITERIA AND METHOD FOR DISCERNMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:
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The purpose of this thesis is to critically assess a theological paradigm for the discernment of the Holy Spirit. The Catholic tradition affirms that the ecclesial, spiritual, and moral life of Catholics is sustained and guided by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ, given by God, enables participation in the divine life through the sacraments and prayer of the Church. This affirmation is foundational to Catholic theology and life. Because of this, this thesis seeks to address the practice and method of discerning the Holy Spirit. How do Catholics open themselves to the presence of the Holy Spirit? How do they determine when the Spirit is actually present, and what the Spirit is leading them to do?

One theological paradigm for the discernment of the Spirit is Thomas Dubay's *Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment*. Dubay attempts to distinguish between actions based on the Spirit's involvement and those based on sin or subjective illusion. The proposed thesis applies Dubay's methodology to common questions of discernment in order to illuminate different aspects of the Holy Spirit's involvement in human life.

The thesis will assess Dubay's paradigm through ethnographic research conducted among members of a Catholic religious community. The integration of fieldwork with theological scholarship by means of ethnographic study is a dimension of

Sarah Coakley's method of *théologie totale*. Using both participant observation and interviews, I researched the practices of prayerful reception of the Spirit and active discernment of the Spirit in the male branch of the Society of Mary (Marianist) communities in Dayton, Ohio. The Marianists are a Roman Catholic religious community of brothers and priests that work in areas such as education, social justice, and environmental preservation. Members of this community are part of the order's Province of the United States, whose mission states that they are a community "empowered by the Holy Spirit." On the basis of this research, I will assess Dubay's theological paradigm seeking to answer the following: Is it adequate to account for the lived experience of Marianist communities? Are there aspects of the paradigm that need revision? Is there a need for any enhancements or additions?

Dedicated to both Pobby (John J. Beale) and Fr. Paul Landolfi, S.M.

“And God is able to provide you with every blessing in
abundance, so that by having enough of everything,
you may share abundantly in every good work.”

2 Corinthians 9:8

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INTRODUCTION

Where can one begin with discernment? All of us must make choices in our lives, whether we do so with careful consideration or not. These decisions and actions shape the paths that our lives will take. They can also affect our day-to-day operations and conditions. The form of decision-making addressed here is the careful and intentional discernment of the will of the Holy Spirit.

Answering questions and distinguishing a method of discernment has been a theological interest of mine for quite some time now. In studying theology, I am fascinated when I hear phrases such as “inspired by the Spirit” and “led by the Spirit.” This affirmation that the Spirit is leading and justifying one’s own actions must be better understood. Saints and scholars have examined the discernment of spirits for centuries, each bringing their own perspective to these questions. My own life has required levels of discernment. For example, I faced a decision as to whether or not to come study at the University of Dayton after completing my undergraduate degree. I remember this process of discernment revolving around periods of silence, prayer, and seeking direction. However, in taking these steps, I began to question whether or not the way I was approaching discernment was the “proper way.” I then began to ask myself if there really is a proper criteria or method to discernment that isn’t relative. Where was the Spirit leading me? ¹ Questions and situations such as this have led me to take up this research. I

¹ This is the question I was asking after completing college and continue to ask myself as I approach life after graduate school. However, events occurred during my time of discernment that solidified my decision to attend graduate school. On my first visit to the University of Dayton, my grandfather (Pobby) passed away. Pobby had always been an influence in my life and, much like my parents, wanted me to be happy and fulfilled in life. I took his passing hard and turned to the Spirit for guidance and direction. How can I be in an environment that makes me constantly thinking about someone who helped form me into the person I am today? The decision was hard but through discernment and discussion I came to recognize that Pobby

would even say that I have been called by the Spirit to dive deeper into answering these lingering questions I have about how to properly discern the will of the Holy Spirit.

In this thesis, I will distinguish a criteria and method for discerning the Holy Spirit by comparing a theological paradigm to an ethnographic study I conducted of a Marianist community of religious brothers and priests. In Chapter One, I will introduce the concept and practice of discernment; discuss discernment's relationship to both prayer and desire; the problems and challenges facing discernment; how discerning the Holy Spirit looks like within a community; and finally, an examination of what discernment looks like within the contemporary Church. From there, in Chapter Two, I will discuss at length Thomas Dubay's *Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment* in order to distinguish a working discernment paradigm to be revisited throughout the course of this thesis. Then, in Chapter Three, I will introduce and discuss Sarah Coakley's theological method, *théologie totale*, and the work of Robert Orsi and several other scholars to support the use of both fieldwork and ethnography in theology and religious studies. In Chapter Four, I will offer a brief history of the Society of Mary (Marianists), introduce Marianist Spirituality, and discuss my ethnographic study of a Marianist community in Dayton. Chapter Five will then be a synthesis of both Dubay's paradigm and the Marianists lived model of discernment. In doing this, I will both affirm and offer enhancement to Dubay's paradigm. Finally, in the conclusion, I will distinguish a method and criteria for discerning the Holy Spirit.

would have wanted me to go to the University of Dayton and his spirit has accompanied me throughout my whole time in this program.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING DISCERNMENT

In the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul gives a clear indication of discerning the Spirit by talking about Christians being guided to make good or bad decisions. This first chapter of my thesis accomplishes five things. One is to introduce the concept of discernment. Second, I will introduce the relationship of the practice of discernment to prayer and desire. Third, I will address some of the problems and challenges that arise when attempting to discern the Holy Spirit. The fourth section will introduce how discerning the will of the Holy Spirit is done within a Christian community. The fifth and final section of this chapter will discuss discernment's importance and the role that it plays in the life of the contemporary Church.

Discernment

Raymond Bautista, a former Jesuit novice master in the Philippines, describes discernment as one's ability to detect something that is either obscure or concealed that aids in providing insight and judgement.² The root of the word comes from the Greek *diakrisis*, which means to separate, to sift through, to sort out, to distinguish. A way in which to understand discernment is to see it as a habit or way of being. This habit of being is accessible to all, but one must take certain steps to become disciplined in the practice of discernment. Bautista argues that there are four words from the Greek New Testament that are synonymous in meaning to both the English verb "to discern" and the

² Ramon L. Bautista, "Discernment of Spirits in the Bible," *Landas* 28, no. 1 (2014), 91.

noun “discernment.”³ These words are: *anakrino*, *diakrino*, *dokimazo*, and diakrisis. *Diakrino* (verb) means to examine, separate out, and discriminate. *Dokimazo* (verb) means to test, to prove, to scrutinize so as to decide. *Diakrisis* (noun) means a distinguishing, a clear discrimination, discerning, judging. *Anakrino* (verb) means to distinguish or separate so as to investigate by looking through objects or particulars; to examine, scrutinize, and judge closely.

When one reads both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, one will notice that there are a number of instances where people in scripture had to choose between good and evil spirits. In the Hebrew Bible, one of the most prominent stories of discerning between good and bad spirits is found in the discrimination that Eve and Adam must make between God and the serpent (Gen 3:1). Bautista points out a number of other instances within the first few books of the Hebrew Bible in which the people of Israel face choices between life and death (Dt 30:11-20), whether to serve the Lord or other gods (Jer 5:19), and finally between good and false prophets (Dt 18:21; Jer 23:14).⁴ However, it isn’t until the epistles of the New Testament that the terminology that can be translated to mean the “discernment of spirits” is actually used (1 Cor 12:10; 1 Jn 4:1).⁵

Bautista illustrates the instances where discernment is practiced throughout the New Testament. He cites instances such as discrimination between the works of light and darkness (Eph 5:8-14); angels and devils (Rev 12:1-12); good spirits and unclean spirits

³ Bautista, “Discernment of Spirits in the Bible,” 91.

⁴ Bautista, “Discernment of Spirits in the Bible,” 92.

⁵ Bautista, “Discernment of Spirits in the Bible,” 92. “It is St. Paul, specifically, who brings up this need to discern these “spirits” when he declares that one of the many gifts of the Holy Spirit to the early Church was the ‘power to distinguish one spirit from another’ (*diakrisesi pneumatōn* [1 Cor. 12:10]). The author of the First Epistle of John also speaks of the same ‘spirits’ when he writes: ‘Beloved do not trust every spirit but put the spirits to a test to see if they belong to God’ (1 Jn. 4:1).”

(Mk1:27; Mt 4:11); fruits of the spirit and fruits of the flesh (Gal 5:13-26); the spirit of truth and the spirit of deception (1Jn 4:1-6); and the standard of Christ and the standard of Satan (2 Cor 2:11; 1 Tim 3:7; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13).⁶ In highlighting these opposing elements requiring discernment, Bautista seeks to demonstrate that there is one main conflict throughout all these narratives: that of grace and evil.⁷ Today, Bautista says one needs to heed the examples found here and apply them to areas of one's own personal life that require a self-examination and reflection of a spiritual state to recognize when one is actively discerning the will of the spirit.

The practice of discernment evident in the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament continued to develop in the Christian tradition. In the richness of this tradition, one can find a variety of definitions of discernment and diverse approaches to its practice. Thomas Aquinas, for example, thought of the discernment of spirits as an extraordinary gift of future insight and the ability to read hearts.⁸ In regard to the discernment of the spirits, one of the great voices in the field is Ignatius of Loyola, who has been described by Mark Thibodeaux as the “the world’s first psychologist.”⁹ No one can deny that Ignatius possessed an ability to understand the interior life and the steps one must take to dive deeper into a life with God. He approached the mission of talking about discernment not with medical terms but with a vocabulary that was very mystical. This ultimately led him to describe the action of discernment as a movement between good and evil.¹⁰ It was

⁶ Bautista, “Discernment of Spirits in the Bible,” 93.

⁷ Bautista, “Discernment of Spirits in the Bible,” 93.

⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911-1925), Ia-IIa, q. 3, art 4.

⁹ Mark E. Thibodeaux, *God’s Voice Within: The Ignatian Way to Discover God’s Will* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press: A Jesuit Ministry, 2010), 9.

¹⁰ Thibodeaux, *God’s Voice Within*, 9.

the belief of Ignatius, as it is still the belief of the Church today, that our choices move us either closer or further from God. In order to properly discern between good and evil, there must be an in-depth examination into what the true and false spirits are. Because of the significance of Ignatian practices of discernment in the tradition, it is important to present his approach in some detail.

Ignatius on True Spirits and False Spirits

After suffering from an injury received fighting for the Spanish in the 16th century, Ignatius was led by the Spirit to serve the Catholic Church and found a new religious community. He wrote of his experiences and developed discernment strategies in his autobiography, affirming that it is necessary to discern between two spirits in the world: true spirits and false spirits. Both of these spirits pulled Ignatius's heart, mind, and passions in several different ways. He recounts that it was the true spirit that led him towards the love of God, leaving him in a state of consolation.¹¹ Similarly, it was the false spirit that led Ignatius astray by drawing him away from God, leaving him in a state of desolation.¹² By using Ignatius's interior life wisdom to understand the practice of discernment of the Holy Spirit, this section will explain what Ignatius means by consolation and desolation. Each section will address the elements and responses to feelings of consolation and desolation.

The True Spirit and Consolation

Ignatius introduces the qualities of the good and true spirit in a series of rules that he developed for discerning the spirits. He writes that the nature of the true spirit is to

¹¹ Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 12. "The 'inner pull' toward God's plan and toward faith, hope, and love. It is also referred to as the 'good spirit.'"

¹² Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 12. "The 'inner pull' away from God's plan and away from faith, hope, and love. The false spirit is also referred to as 'the evil spirit' or 'the enemy of our human nature.'"

give one “strength, consolation, tears, inspirations, and peace.”¹³ Ignatius explains that the reason he notes consolation is a sign of the true spirit is due in large part to the love that surrounds the feeling.¹⁴ Some ways that consolation is practiced is by directing our focus outside and beyond oneself. This enables one to lift one’s heart so as to see both the joys and sorrows of other people. Consolation in discernment thereby creates a common bond with other members of the human community.¹⁵ This bond enables inspiration and ideas to be generated to restore balance and refresh one’s inner vision. The balance that is restored through the means of consolation shows where God is leading his people, which ultimately releases a new energy in oneself.

A definitive sign of consolation is a notable sense of God’s presence. Ignatian author Mark Thibodeaux notes that believing that God does exist is not good enough for one to feel and know that God is good.¹⁶ The intimacy that is obtainable through consolation occurs deep within the soul of humanity. Consolation enables one to experience both God’s presence and love. A passage from Isaiah helps to illustrate an intimacy that one can have with God. Isaiah writes that the Lord told Isaiah not to fear because God has called him by his name, claiming Isaiah for himself and saving him (Is 43:1). This level of intimacy and possession that the Lord takes with Isaiah can be used as an example of a relationship with God that each of us potentially may have.

¹³ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. Louis J. Puhl (Maryland: The Newman Press, 1951), 315.

¹⁴ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 316, “I call it consolation when an interior movement is aroused in the soul, by which it is inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord, and as a consequence, can love no creature on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the Creator of them all.”

¹⁵ Thibodeaux, *God’s Voice Within*, 44.

¹⁶ Thibodeaux, *God’s Voice Within*, 48.

Prayer is an important element to consolation just as it is for discernment.

Although, for consolation what might start off as private prayer will never be able to remain private if practiced correctly. Once one has experienced a period of consolation, it is usually hard for one to not notice and recognize a new sense of reality that is a witness of God's love.¹⁷ Therefore, a different dimension emerges that enables one to bask in the love of God and to be in awe of creation. Ignatius too notes that once one sees creation and life through consolation, it is difficult to love as before because the one who has been consoled loves God whose labors are greater than any human.¹⁸

God's consolation has four different manifestations. It is important to note that the first two elements that could manifest themselves during consolation occur infrequently, but they do occur occasionally. The first manifestation is an affective union with God that results in one's very essence being inflamed by the love of God. The second manifestation is a strong affective and emotional expression of God's love. For example, a manifestation of tears that leads to a deeper love for God may come as a result of deep sorrow for either one's past sins or an experience leading one to feel sorrow and pain. The third manifestation of consolation is an increase in faith, hope, and love. This is because God's love for humanity creates more space in one's hearts for the reception of God's love, allowing it to flow through humanity. The fourth and final manifestation of consolation is a developing interior joy, which moves one and all that is towards God. Through this joy, humanity may be filled with peace, quiet, and stillness that extends from the very essence of God.

¹⁷ Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 48.

¹⁸ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 230; 232-7.

There has been much written about what one should do when in a state of consolation. Thibodeaux gives an example of what he would imagine a doctor would say to him if he asked what he should do with all the “good health” he has had. The doctor would most likely respond by advising one’s patient to go and live a good life.¹⁹ This “good life” advice would be entangled with Ignatian principles such as living a life of praise, reverence, and service to God and the Church. However, consolation is not a final stage of the spiritual life, and once one has achieved consolation, it does not mean that they will not enter back onto the path of the false spirit of desolation. Thibodeaux argues that Ignatius never says desolation *may* come after a period of consolation; he states that desolation *will* come after.²⁰

All this is to say that experiencing both consolation and desolation is part of the discernment process. Again, the body is a great metaphor for this fluctuating process of discernment. One can take every precaution necessary to avoid getting sick, but sometimes because of some poor decisions made sickness occurs. However, this does not always mean that one is sick forever; in time one may return to good health. The same is true for the spiritual life.

The False Spirit and Desolation

Ignatius describes the false spirits of desolation as being contrary to true spirits of consolation. He claims that desolation is a “darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit, inclination to what is low and earthly, restlessness rising from many disturbances and temptations which lead to want of faith, want of hope, want of love.”²¹ Ignatius has a keen sense of

¹⁹ Thibodeaux, *God’s Voice Within*, 105.

²⁰ Thibodeaux, *God’s Voice Within*, 108.

²¹ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 317.

where the Spirit was leading him because he developed a system of identifying the spirits, whether they be true or false. Within Ignatian spirituality, both the feelings of consolation and desolation involve much more than feelings.²²

Desolation is recognizable when one notices they have feelings of emptiness in faith, hope, and love. This feeling of emptiness is supported by one losing a sense of God's presence in one's life.²³ Distinguishing between true and false spirits takes a certain level of discernment because false spirits can present themselves as being attractive, uplifting, and enlightening. The false spirits of desolation can also present themselves as a way of bringing one closer to God. Unfortunately, that is not true because the path they take one down is filled with darkness. This darkness masks itself by taking on the appearance of light that may take one down a desolate path.

Desolation can originate within one's thoughts disguised as a virtuous message that is itself congruent with God's true message. Ignatius encourages full attention to the whole process of discernment and awareness of the process and progression of the movement of God. If any part of the spiritual journey is deviating from that which is expected from God, such as a feeling of peace, then the false spirits are most likely present, and the feelings should be noted. Desolation has the ability to drive one down an ever-deepening spiral of negative feelings. This has effects on the way that one engages and interacts with one's own community, making one feel cut off and alone. All of this leads one in desolation to feel that one should give up on all things of importance, leaving

²² Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 16. "There are times, for example, when a person is in consolation precisely *because* he or she is feeling sorrow for past sins, grief for a lost loved on, or anger for an injustice toward the poor. Likewise, the experience of desolation might actually be accompanied by feelings of happiness, comfort, or excitement."

²³ Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 16.

one feeling powerless and alone. This feeling of loneliness crowds the vision and consciousness of the individual in desolation.

Fortunately, there are paths of fortitude through which one can break free of this desolate feeling. One path is to turn to God in prayer and tell him how one feels and to ask for his aid. In doing this, one is actively seeking compassion from God.²⁴ One is able to achieve or revert back to a spirit of consolation by keeping in mind elements of joy and happiness recognized during consolation. Although one is using one's own memory and imagination to recapture periods of consolation while being in desolation, it is the hope of a better future that enables one to continue discerning. A final step to take to break from desolation is to return to God to tell him how one feels and to ask for his guidance and direction.²⁵

Both consolation and desolation are necessary to the development of a discerning heart.²⁶ As one grows in the ability to discern, one can respond to the unique presence of God in one's own life. This cannot occur if one imitates the actions of others who appear to be holy. The relationship one has with God is personal and unique and each person must develop their own discernment practice. The potential to alternate between consolation and desolation is normal, which is why Ignatius views desolation as a way that God gives one true knowledge and understanding of oneself.²⁷ Desolation can heighten one's awareness leading to a greater sensitivity to the different internal movements and their meanings.

²⁴ Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 75.

²⁵ Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 75-76.

²⁶ Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 128.

²⁷ Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 126.

In addition to Ignatius, another primary figure within Christian spirituality who has written on the practice of discernment is John of the Cross. John lived from 1542 to 1591 and is known today for his work along with Teresa of Avila in reforming the Carmelite order in Spain. He is also known for his writing of great spiritual works such as: *Dark Night of the Soul*, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, the *Spiritual Canticle*, and the *Living Flame of Love*.²⁸ All of these works showcase the great prose and talent of John of the Cross, whose writings contribute to our understanding of discernment. John of the Cross writes of discernment as a deeply embedded resource of knowledge of finite things, deed, and events.²⁹

In our own era, a contemporary thinker like John O'Rourke views discernment as the ability to examine the origin of an "extraordinary phenomena."³⁰ Another contemporary author is Edwards Malatesta, who defines discernment as:

A process by which we examine in the light of faith and in the connaturality of love, the nature of the spiritual states (what we may call our "consolations" and "desolations") we experience in ourselves and in others. The purpose of such examination is to decide, as far as possible, which of the movements we experience lead to the Lord and to a more perfect service of him and our (neighbor), and which deflect us from this goal.³¹

Yet another definition of discernment comes from Philip Sheldrake who writes:

In the Christian tradition... discernment involves the wisdom to recognize the difference between courses of action that are life directing and the ones that are potentially destructive because they are out of harmony with our true nature and our relationship with God. The wisdom of discernment of spirits is meant to form a spiritual and ethical backdrop to life as a whole and to the way life is orientated, whereby we come to

²⁸ Leonard Doohan, *The Contemporary Challenge of John of the Cross: An Introduction to His Life and Teaching* (District of Columbia: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1995), 34.

²⁹ Thomas Dubay, *Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 40.

³⁰ John J. O'Rourke, in *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Nelson, 1975), 1156.

³¹ Thomas H. Green, *Weeds Among the Wheat* (Florida: Ave Maria Press, 1984), 41.

recognize almost instinctively our deepest truth and respond to God's communication in daily exercise.³²

As Thomas Dubay explains, the word "discernment" is used with a number of different meanings in the Christian tradition. One can use the term to be synonymous with a prayerful inquiry or a communal discussion, but in turning to different sources written about discernment one begins to see different nuances in meaning.³³ There are more examples of the difference in terminology that could be presented. Overall, however, the concept of discernment that will be operative in this thesis is the practice of evaluation of one's inclinations and desires to determine whether or not they are from God.³⁴

Discernment, Prayer, and Desire

Two elements that continue to come up in researching discernment of the Holy Spirit are prayer and desire. In practicing discernment, one seeks to become responsible for one's own affectivity and for one's ability to make decisions. Some steps required for a person to develop fruitful discernment capabilities are to be deeply reflective, to understand the inner stirring of movements within oneself, and to listen both deeply and habitually to the ongoing movement of the Holy Spirit. Sowing in habits of prayer into one's own lifestyle enables the path of discernment to become more prominent and noticeable.

Discernment is a practice of acknowledging God's will in one's life. It is helpful to think of God's will and desire not as something outside of oneself, but instead as a

³² Philip Sheldrake, "Discernment, Social Wisdom and the Public Realm," *Milltown Studies* 68 (Winter, 2011): 1-20.

³³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 40.

³⁴ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 42.

divine indwelling of the human person. This relationship is special in a number of ways because God's indwelling within humanity means that God is no longer outside human reality but in the words of Saint Augustine "more intimate to me than I am to myself."³⁵ Prayer helps to illuminate this truth in a deeply intimate way by revealing the tender relationship between Creator and created. However, growing in prayer is not a simple task to accomplish. Rowan Williams argues that there are three elements to prayer that are essential to the Christian tradition. The first one, which is also the most important, is acknowledging that Christ prays through the human person.³⁶ Prayer is not a matter of trying to persuade God, but instead it opens the hearts and minds of humanity to see God through a whole new light. One is to present themselves to God the Father stating that it is Christ who is praying through them accompanied by the Spirit acting in love.³⁷ The second element is the establishment of a deep connection between praying and living rightly in the world.³⁸ This element breeds a certain level of maturity because, in prayer, the life of Christ comes alive within humanity. Williams explains that prayer "is absolutely bound up with a certain way of being human which is about reconciliation, mercy, and freely extending the welcome and the love of God to others."³⁹ The third element of prayer is faithfulness and fidelity. Williams describes situations when he made himself vulnerable in prayer, allowing the Lord to work through him in that moment. Prayer can be a lonely and consuming practice, especially as one enters deeper and

³⁵ Marko Ivan Rupnik, *Discernment: Acquiring the Heart of God* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 7.

³⁶ Rowan Williams, *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer* (Eerdmans: William B. Publishing Company, 2014), 80.

³⁷ Williams, *Being Christian*, 80.

³⁸ Williams, *Being Christian*, 80.

³⁹ Williams, *Being Christian*, 80-1.

deeper into prayer. Williams suggests that when this happens, one should not increase one's own doubts but rather utter "O God, make speed to save me."⁴⁰ In praying, the requirement is that one pledges to be there for God, just as God has been there for all of humanity. This final element shows the intimacy that God has with the one in prayer. Discernment places great emphasis on prayer primarily because of this intimacy with God. It is essential for one to pray in order for one's own discernment to be both accurate and fruitful.

Desire is another consistent element in the relationship that God has with humanity.⁴¹ God dwells within one's desires because not all desires are evil, but they can be a way for God to communicate with humanity. Desires exist for a reason, and one in discernment should be encouraged to tap into one's own desire for guidance.⁴² The desire that God and humanity have for a relationship with one another consistently exists even through doubt, or pain, or uncertainty. A fundamental component of human desire is coming to know that one is loved by God and then loving God and others in return. The ability to recognize, express, and give such a uniquely powerful love aids in developing feelings of happiness, belonging, joy, and fulfillment. The emotions brought on by desire serve to bring one closer into communion with God who knows each of us so well.

⁴⁰ Williams, *Being Christian*, 81.

⁴¹ See Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay "On the Trinity"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). This overlaps with Sarah Coakley's theological method *théologie totale* and the way desire has an effect on it. For Coakley desire that has not been distorted by sin is a means of knowledge and understanding of God. In prayer one must recognize and channel divine desire in order to reformulate human desire. See pages 58-59 in Coakley.

⁴² Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within*, 167.

Although desire is accompanied by a certain level of intensity, one is often left questioning the authenticity of such feelings. Authentic desires tend to reach into the very heart of one's identity, which awakens within oneself a feeling that one belongs and that the revelation of one's true identity is found within God. These desires have a life-directional element to them because through the practice of discernment one can discover the true roots of one's own actions. An examination into the roots of one's actions is a necessary element of discernment because it helps one come to cultivate a greater self-understanding. This self-examination enables one to see the causation of certain decisions. The practice of discernment will help in distinguishing the difference between one's own desires and the desires that God has for the individual.

An aspect of discernment that should be addressed is the freedom that one possesses to both respond and act in love. When one willfully chooses God and embraces the love and honor God has for humanity, a bond begins to form. This bond between the divine and creation cannot be separated if it has been discerned properly. All of this alludes back to the principle that discernment of the Spirit leads to a path of discovering God's indwelling within the heart of humanity. It is in this discovery of one's own identity rooted in God that one discovers true freedom and love. As humans, we may long for a fixed system through which we solve our problems. One of the beauties of prayer, however, is that generally your prayer is your own movement, your own conversation with the divine which is an element of the discernment process. Prayer is unique to every person. Even though there cannot exist a fixed system for self-discovery, elements of discernment aid in one coming to know oneself. Through this practice, one comes to know one's own core values through the direction of the Spirit's wisdom. One

of the recommendations for approaching discernment is to be in conversation with an experienced spiritual director who can be an advisor and guide for the spiritual life. However, challenges arise even when working with a spiritual director, as they do not always have the answers one seeks.

Discernment ultimately aids in the growth of the relationship one has with God, enabling the practice of discernment to become second nature. One must become attentive to the internal workings of one's own mind, which is why prayer and reflection are key habits to approaching discernment. Both a developed conscience and prayerful habits are foundational to the practice of discernment. However, just as one would expect in any other relationship, there will be both joy and delight and inevitable struggle.

Problems and Challenges

When it comes to the practice of discerning the Holy Spirit, there arise more challenges than one might assume. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, in my own life I have practiced discernment when facing decisions. This raised questions for me about proper criteria or methods of discernment. This section of the chapter addresses some problems and concerns within the practice of discernment that have presented themselves throughout the course of this research. I will draw primarily from Thomas Dubay's *Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment*, whose paradigm of discernment I will employ in subsequent chapters. I seek here to address the following issues that one must consider when reflecting on discernment of the Holy Spirit: subjective illusion, purification and authentic messaging, interpretation, and illuminism.

Subjective Illusion

Dubay writes that those who speak easily of the Spirit as giving direct detailed guidance for their lives are least likely to be authentically communicating with God. His evidence for this position is that, throughout the history of the Church, the saints and mystics were least impressed by these messages.⁴³ In his words, they “brush divine communications away as if they were of no importance.”⁴⁴ Those who are able to authentically discern the Spirit are also those who hold a certain level of religious skepticism. By holding both truth and uncertainty together, mystics have been able to discriminate between true and false interpretations of spiritual experience.⁴⁵ This is a fruit of discernment. One may believe that the Spirit speaks clearly in human words, but that is a false presumption. Moreover, Dubay emphasizes that we are all affected by unconscious motivations. Our susceptibility to subjective illusions requires self-scrutiny in the discernment process. Dubay argues that those who fall victim to their own illusions and speak falsely about the Spirit have very little comprehension of human nature and the authentic experience of God.⁴⁶

Purification and the Possibility of Discernment

As aforementioned, Dubay writes that those who have authentically discerned the messages of the Spirit emphasize that it is not an easy process. He affirms both of these two propositions: (1) God does enlighten from within and (2) that many who believe that they understand and have detected God’s working within them actually have not.⁴⁷ How

⁴³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 42.

⁴⁴ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 42.

⁴⁵ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 42-3.

⁴⁶ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 43.

⁴⁷ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 44.

then does one move forward in discernment? Is it even possible for one to authentically experience God's presence?

Dubay responds by turning to the example of St. John of the Cross. He explains that the divine light of God's presence within oneself is not immediately perceptible to us because it first illumines our failings and sins. However, over time by entering into a deeper state of prayer and a process of purification, we begin "to perceive the positive goods God is giving."⁴⁸ The period of desolation and separation from God is part of entering into the dark night that John of the Cross is most notable for. John argues that once one has acknowledged one's sins and failings that the divine light slowly burns the darkness buried within one's heart. This painful process of purification, for John of the Cross, enables one to be more receptive to the Spirit's presence in one's own life.⁴⁹ All of this is to say that both purification and discernment are necessary to an authentic interpretation of spiritual experience.

Interpretation

Although saints and mystics do not place emphasis on communications from God, Dubay does believe valid inspirations can occur. How, then, are they to be interpreted? This is no easy matter. Dubay writes that saints themselves have sometimes mixed both historical and theological errors into the interpretations of their visions. He cites P. de Letter, who writes of the errors in the writings of visionaries that reflect their particular time and place. He claims that the differences between human and divine

⁴⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 44.

⁴⁹ John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), bk. 2, chap. 13, no. 10; p. 77. St. Paul too also mentions that those who are mature enough in the spiritual life will be able to discern the Spirit because they are pure and wise enough to detect God's light and message.

elements are sometimes hard to discriminate. Dubay emphasizes that the fact that even honest, saintly, and psychologically healthy people write of divine inspiration in a manner mixed with human error calls into question the sufficiency of private interpretation.

Discernment is a practice that requires time and prayerful investigation. For one to definitively state that the Spirit leads one to be or act in such a specific way should be examined closely by those whom Dubay believes have authority in discernment. This lies within the ecclesial hierarchy of ordained ministers who possess a certain ecclesial authority. This could be one's local parish priest, deacon, religious brother, or bishop to list a few. Although the signs and messages of God cannot be accurately examined and placed down into an encyclopedia of discernment, consistent themes are present: desire and joy. God desires to be in communion with his people and creation, but because the element of free will was given to humanity, the ability for one to understand and accept this truth is a challenge. Every human being is unique which creates a plethora of ways that God's messages can be interpreted and received. This creates an issue in the practice of discernment because not all the messages and signs of God are the same or able to be cross-referenced. It is good to know that interpreting messages from the Spirit is not an easy thing to do because the way that humans interpret these messages are by human means. However, since God's thoughts are not our own thoughts and God's ways are not human ways (Isa 58:8-9), it is hard to accurately decipher these signs of the Spirit. Problems of interpretation and reception have no simple solution other than to approach this problem with an open heart, fortified prayer, and a joyful spirit that desires to come to know God.

Illuminism

Illuminism is not an uncommon topic of discussion when talking about discernment of spirits. Illuminism is rooted in the truth that God does enlighten everyone who comes into the world (Jn. 1:9).⁵⁰ However, Dubay argues that illuminism distorts this truth and becomes an enemy to discernment for three reasons.⁵¹ It knows only the inner light and ignores or rejects biblical texts that emphasize the importance of guidance from an outside structure. In so doing, it may create a new authoritarianism. Second, it discredits true discernment in the eyes of those less informed, who reject the genuine inner light because of the exaggerated claims of the illuminists.⁵² The third danger that Dubay articulates is that illuminism gives rise to other rival illuminist frames of thought. The rise of other camps of illuminist thinking creates a series of conflicts in deciphering what is a true and authentic divine message led by the Spirit. It is fair to say that if the practice of discernment of the Spirit is to be a fruitful endeavor, then there must be a distinction between discernment and illuminism in both theory and practice.⁵³

Communal Discernment

Discerning the will of the Holy Spirit can be done in both personal and ecclesial settings. When reading both of Paul's letters to the Church in Corinth, one can see the highlighted gifts that the people as both individuals and community possess. Ladislav Orsy, a Jesuit professor of Canon Law, calls for Christian communities today to follow

⁵⁰ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 51.

⁵¹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 52.

⁵² Dubay, *Authenticity*, 52.

⁵³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 53. Here Dubay is making it clear that the those who speak on opposition to illuminism are those who have studied the illuminist movement from Montanism to Jansenism that have made its way into contemporary thinking.

the Corinthians' example of recognizing the necessary wisdom for discernment.⁵⁴ Orsy has spent most of his life living in Jesuit communities worldwide, giving him an experience of discerning different community dynamics and practices. Even before Ignatius wrote on discernment, Orsy notes, the discernment of the Spirit has been present in the communities of God's people extending back to Abraham. Orsy demonstrates how both Abraham and Sarah discerned whether to accept God's mysterious call, just as Mary discerned her fiat to the angel and just as Jorge Bergoglio discerned accepting taking up the reigns of being Bishop of Rome.⁵⁵

Orsy sets out to decipher what communal discernment means and how a group of people can become a community of one heart and mind. The communion one can have with one's community is impossible if an authority figure in the community makes all the decisions. Instead, Orsy says that members of a community need to hold one another accountable by centering the community towards what is right and just for all.⁵⁶ Orsy demonstrates that the community's mission is to be united. He does this by talking about the following: theological foundations of communal discernment; what the community should and should not expect in communal discernment; and finally, practical guidelines for communal discernment.

One must become attuned to the Spirit in order to understand the process necessary to resolve spiritual issues. Orsy demonstrates that the group of discerners must allow the Spirit to engulf the community in grace to discover what God has in store

⁵⁴ Ladislav Orsy, *Discernment: Theology and Practice, Communal and Personal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2020), 5.

⁵⁵ Orsy, *Discernment*, 6.

⁵⁶ Orsy, *Discernment*, 7.

within a community.⁵⁷ The two paradigms that Orsy uses to write about the theological foundation of a community are the account of the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35) and his Jesuit formation and experience. During the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem, the council fathers had to unite and discern where the Holy Spirit led all of them. The Church during this period was still in its infancy stage, which required members of the Church to decide on ecclesial matters. The question at hand was the proper criteria an individual had to meet to be considered a Christian. Overall, Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles that the decisions made by the council fathers satisfied the concerns of the Church. Luke even goes as far as to write the following, “for it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (15:28), leading those present to conclude the results of the council were revealed to them by the Spirit.

Ignatius of Loyola, in his early guidelines directing his community, writes about how the Spirit led and directed the community's creation.⁵⁸ Ignatius's rules, which were written for an individual, can fit a community model, which Orsy demonstrates in writing extensively on the theological foundation of communal discernment. Each community member deserves respect and for their voice to be heard on matters concerning to the person, which is why Orsy insists that there must be a balance between individual issues versus communal issues brought up in discernment. Communal discernment should never be overlooked because it is valid for the community's prosperity and progress towards God's service. In order for the community to reach wisdom, prudence is required.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Orsy, *Discernment*, 12.

⁵⁸ See *the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, 313-316.

⁵⁹ Orsy, *Discernment*, 18.

In order to better understand communal discernment, one must understand what one should expect versus what not to expect. Orsy emphasizes the importance of prayer in communal discernment so much so that a habit of prayer must be important to the individual in order for communal discernment to be effective. Orsy therefore believes that a prayerful spirit is a prerequisite to establish a community. Community members are to live out the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love in order not to be governed by passion and selfish drives.⁶⁰ God speaks to the faithful through means of silence in order to bestow wisdom and grace from the Spirit. This reception by the faithful gives one's community strength in awareness of the Lord, which is done by means of prayerful concentration on the answers the Holy Spirit is making known to one's community.⁶¹ In practicing communal discernment, one can be healed and restored to one's true nature, which is rooted through God. This restoration makes one's community whole and united for a common purpose to make wise decisions. Orsy believes that communal discernment done properly is a process of building in the Holy Spirit and liberation in understanding the will of the Holy Spirit.⁶² One who communally discerns helps other community members to turn away from ignorance, misguided judgments, and hesitations.

An important element of authentic communal discernment is that this process is not a method of predicting the future. Communal discernment is supposed to enable the community to see the next step and give them the strength to take that step. Orsy points out here that the Spirit will sometimes lead a community into a spiritual battle with one

⁶⁰ Orsy, *Discernment*, 29.

⁶¹ Orsy, *Discernment*, 29.

⁶² Orsy, *Discernment*, 31.

another for the sake of producing good fruit and the discovery of God.⁶³ The Spirit cannot be forced to reveal the direction the Spirit is leading an individual and a community. Communal discernment is a difficult art that needs to be practiced, and, in doing so, conflicts will arise. However, Orsy argues that it is better for one to train one's mind to glorify God, to open one's mind to glorify God, and to discipline one's mind to glorify God.⁶⁴

Consensus should not be the goal of communal discernment; in fact, Orsy states that if a group does not come to a consensus, to remember that to disagree is very much Catholic.⁶⁵ Orsy notes that when the first fathers of the Society of Jesus deliberated the founding and constitutions of the order, there were most likely disagreements.⁶⁶ However, the founders understood Ignatius's Spirit-inspired mission and both trusted and rejoiced in the unity of their order. Although a consensus is possible, it is not always the outcome, which is why communities possess the knowledge and grace to both accept and rejoice in the decision. The common connection within a community is usually never identical judgments. However, for the sake of one's community, members usually accept the decided conclusion for the sake of charity. The wisdom that runs through communal discernment enables one to see the wisdom of the majority and to bring peace about the communal decision.⁶⁷ All of this is to say that through communal discernment, the community comes to understand God's will and the steps necessary towards continual service of the spirit.

⁶³ Orsy, *Discernment*, 35.

⁶⁴ Orsy, *Discernment*, 43-4.

⁶⁵ Orsy, *Discernment*, 52.

⁶⁶ Orsy, *Discernment*, 53.

⁶⁷ Orsy, *Discernment*, 54.

In review, Orsy concludes by offering the reader practical guidelines for communal discernment. A few of these elements are that models of discernment are not to be used exactly as it has been presented in scholarship because every community is different.⁶⁸ For example, Ignatius's model of discernment needs to be adapted to fit the mold of the community while not compromising on its key principles. Human beings can gather and call upon the Spirit to guide a community in making a decision, but Orsy comments that the Spirit is not a servant that is called upon to perform a task. The Spirit has its own mission and objectives that are revealed to the community when the community is prayerful and ready. The community should recognize that each member is on the journey together to become one heart and mind united in Christ. This creates an ongoing process of discernment that is essential for the fruitfulness of the community. One's community should always revisit and reexamine the final outcomes of the communal discernment, according to Orsy. Asking questions such as: Was every member of the discerning community thoroughly acquainted with all relevant facts? Was every member learned and versed in the subject matter? Was there ample time for reflection and engagement of opinions? Was there any member who was silent, and was the environment comfortable for them to share thoughts? What did prayer look like in making a decision?⁶⁹ All must be taken into account when communally discerning decisions for one's community.

⁶⁸ Orsy, *Discernment*, 67.

⁶⁹ Orsy, *Discernment*, 70-1.

Discernment's Importance and Role in the Contemporary Church

It is evident that discernment plays a role within the life of the Church. Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* writes of the urgent need for discernment in the Church. The people of God are faced with many challenges and decisions. However, Francis emphasizes that the only way to determine whether a path is led by the Spirit or the devil is through the practice of discernment.⁷⁰ He elaborates on this point by telling the faithful that if they wish to seek and develop a relationship with the Spirit, they must engulf themselves in prayer, reflection, reading, and finally being formed in good counsel.⁷¹ The need for discernment is urgent and necessary for the Church today because contemporary lifestyles are enriched with a plethora of potentials and possibilities that are potentially directed towards the Spirit and the common good. Unfortunately, if one does not discern one's own route, one may be led further away from God and the Church.

Francis directs this emphasis on discernment especially to the youth of the Church because of their immersion in a "culture of zapping."⁷² Discernment of spirits is a necessity when it comes to contemporary culture because young people today are required to balance a number of different scenarios that exist within both the physical and virtual realms. The advancement of certain platforms such as social media need to be examined using the discernment of spirits because the same basic principles that are used in the Church's discernment are both applicable and necessary for her sustainability.⁷³ It

⁷⁰ Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2018), 166.

⁷¹ *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 166.

⁷² *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 167.

⁷³ *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 167-8. "Discernment is necessary not only at extraordinary times, when we need to resolve grave problems and make crucial decisions. It is a means of spiritual combat for helping us to

is the ability to distinguish between what is good and bad for the soul of humanity and of the Church, which is why one should stay on the path through which the Spirit leads. Through the name of Jesus Christ all are free and Francis emphasizes that discernment is essential to actualizing that freedom. The Spirit helps guide one's desires, fears, and questions towards the truth and freedom found in Christ.⁷⁴

An essential element of discerning the Spirit that has been noted throughout this research and has been emphasized by Pope Francis is prayer. He concludes his section on discernment by reminding the people of God that prayer is essential to begin a proper discernment and grow closer to the Lord. A prayerful discernment, as Francis puts it, must come into existence out of one's desire to listen patiently for the Lord.⁷⁵ If one listens and prays patiently then the possibilities of a better life centered around Christ and his Church are tangible. The impression here is that if one listens correctly, then one's attitude towards life will change in obedience with the Gospel, the teachings of the Magisterium, and by that nature the Church, herself. The role of discernment of the Spirit in the Church today is allowing the Spirit to shed its divine light onto the dark aspects of one's life, to direct one's decisions moving forward, and in so doing to unite the Church community together.

follow the Lord more faithfully. We need it at all times, to help us recognize God's timetable, lest we fail to heed the promptings of his grace and disregard his invitation to grow." 169.

⁷⁴ *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 168. "The Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways, at work, through others and at every moment. Yet we simply cannot do without the silence of prolonged prayer, which enables us better to perceive God's language, to interpret the real meaning of the inspirations we believe we have received, to calm our anxieties and to see the whole of our existence afresh in his own light. In this way, we allow the birth of a new synthesis that springs from a life inspired by the Spirit." 171.

⁷⁵ *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 172. "We must remember that prayerful discernment must be born of a readiness to listen: to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways."

Conclusion

This chapter has served as an introduction to the concept and practice of discernment. In doing so, I have discussed the relationship that the practice of discernment has with both prayer and desire. Then I reviewed some problems and challenges that arise in the process of discerning the Holy Spirit. From there, I discussed how discerning the Holy Spirit looks within a community setting. Finally, I have demonstrated the importance of discernment in the life of the contemporary Church. Moving forward into Chapter Two, I will discuss the discernment paradigm of Thomas Dubay. By discussing Dubay's paradigm at length, I begin to build the framework of this thesis to distinguish a method and criteria of discerning the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER TWO

THOMAS DUBAY'S THEOLOGICAL PARADIGM FOR DISCERNMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The paradigm that this research seeks to examine comes from the work of Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M., who wrote extensively on methods of both discernment and prayer. Dubay was a Marist priest originally born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. After attending a Catholic high school run by the Christian Brothers in Minneapolis, Fr. Dubay answered a calling to enter religious life, moving to the Marist Novitiate and making his first vows in 1944. From there, Fr. Dubay would go on to study at Marist College in Washington, D.C., and was later ordained a Marist priest in 1950. After his ordination, Dubay remained in the Capital area, receiving both his master's and doctorate from The Catholic University of America. Fr. Dubay would then become a faculty member at a number of seminaries and universities around the United States and then returned to Marist College in Washington to focus on his spiritual writing.

Once he settled down and began writing, Fr. Dubay's work became primarily focused on how the Church addresses spirituality after the Second Vatican Council. Through the permission of his superiors, Fr. Dubay began leading workshops with different religious communities in restructuring, renewing, and rewording their community constitutions. During this time, Fr. Dubay began to pray and become affiliated with many religious communities, both new and old. This networking enabled Fr. Dubay to accept invitations to speak at a number of different events about his writing

and expertise in the spiritual life.⁷⁶ At this point, Fr. Dubay had already been a published spiritual writer whose counsel was sought out. Later on, Fr. Dubay continued publishing material while also transitioning to television, offering a series of recorded lectures on prayer, community life, and discernment with Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN). Fr. Dubay would continue his priestly ministry while also writing and speaking on prayer until dying from bladder cancer in 2008.

Thomas Dubay's book *Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment* offers a theological paradigm of discernment that helps to frame this thesis. Throughout the course of this chapter, there will be an examination of Dubay's paradigm that synthesizes different methods of discerning the Holy Spirit. Dubay's paradigm of discernment revolves around examining the meaning of authenticity. This chapter will examine questions regarding what Dubay means by authenticity, the possibilities and conditions of discernment, the different fruits and signs of the Holy Spirit, and authentically verifying the place of the Holy Spirit.

Authenticity

One of the main foci in Dubay's paradigm of a theology of discernment revolves around the word "authenticity." He begins this discussion by distinguishing different principles that this word can entail. Authenticity originates from the Greek word *authentikos*, meaning "a factual situation that gives no sign of appearing to be false."⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Thomas Dubay's book *Authenticity* was originally published in the 1970's. After the Second Vatican Council religious communities were being asked to rethink or reestablish their communities' formal constitutions and ways of living. Dubay assisted in this by consulting with different religious communities and conducting workshops on what religious life looks like after the closing of the Council. An apparent question that lingered was "what does authentic religious life look like?" This was an interesting choice of words because precisely during this period the word "authenticity" was being used to judge whether or not something was true or false. It was also an important term in existential philosophy.

⁷⁷ Thomas Dubay, *Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 26.

The Church teaches that human beings tend to be drawn towards the truth (CCC 2367), meaning that one is often drawn towards authentically true messages. Dubay is attempting to get one to understand that in order for human beings to authentically discern the will of the Spirit, it is demanded of one to be genuine with God as well as oneself. When one is less than truthful with oneself, one not only lets down one's self but one's own community as well. He points out that the disciples, just like society today, had to learn to live with the truth of Jesus Christ, which required the disciples to be authentic and live this truth no matter the consequences. To differentiate authentic truth from unauthentic messages and ways of living is one of the goals of Dubay's paradigm. Dubay's model consists of a series of steps that he believes are essential to an authentic spiritual life. Many of them will seem self-explanatory or even obvious in a sense, but, overall, Dubay views this approach as the best way to determine the authenticity of a Christian life. He outlines nine ramifications of the theological principle of authenticity in the practice of the spiritual life.

The first area for discerning and living a gospel-filled life is through spiritual direction. The message of Christ must be applied to the individual, which requires a certain level of examination and conversation with a trained individual. Through the accompaniment of a spiritual director, two people are to detect the actions of the Spirit. The spiritual director is not superior to the person seeking advice, but instead, the spiritual director is to be a guide accompanying the directed on a spiritual path. In guiding people in the direction that the Spirit calls them, the spiritual director helps one uncover their ability to think and act authentically.⁷⁸ A series of questions must be asked

⁷⁸ Thomas Dubay, *Seeking Spiritual Direction* (Ann Harbor: Servant Publications, 1993), 65.

when choosing a competent and effective spiritual director. These questions involve a number of different issues, from ecclesial questions to moral questions, but Dubay's recommendation is to find a spiritual director who is experienced and will bring the directee closer to God.⁷⁹ A competent and knowledgeable spiritual director possesses the information and insight necessary to guide one through the theology of discernment of spirits.⁸⁰

The second ramification of authenticity is growth in prayer. Building on the first area of spiritual direction, the spiritual director should encourage their directees to grow in the habit of prayer. Dubay, using the Catechism, argues that prayer cannot be separated from the Christian life because both proceed from God's love and both require renunciation (CCC 2745).⁸¹ If one does not live a life that showcases this love, then one does not live authentically. One is not listening to the Spirit if one does not grow in the habit of prayer, which for Dubay is vital to both human and spiritual development.

The third area of authenticity is liturgical vitality, which addresses the preservation of tradition and liturgy. In this section, Dubay talks about how the celebration of the true liturgy is a worship of God in the Spirit of truth. A renewal of the tradition of the liturgy enables the Spirit to move through symbols, musical instruments, a variety of readings, etc.⁸² The renewal of this tradition allows for the faithful to become the biblical promise of the new creation.⁸³ Dubay calls genuine liturgy a power that can enable work, recreation, and private prayer that is centered around God.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Dubay, *Seeking Spiritual Direction*, 67.

⁸⁰ Dubay, *Seeking Spiritual Direction*, 267.

⁸¹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 31.

⁸² Dubay cautions the reader here about the possibility of visible liturgical practices devoid of inner devotion. Genuine liturgy flows from hearts inflamed with the love of God.

⁸³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 32.

⁸⁴ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 32.

The fourth area is interpreting scripture. As a priest, Dubay has spent a significant amount of time studying and interpreting scripture leading him to understand that to do so is not an easy step. Understanding scripture is both a divine and human task that requires a certain level of spiritual formation. Interestingly enough, Dubay is not arguing that for one to interpret scripture, one needs to possess a certain level of theological education, such as knowing ancient languages and reading commentaries. Instead, Dubay believes that interpreting scripture can only be authentically achieved when someone dives into the Spirit, allowing themselves to be enlightened by the inner eye.⁸⁵ He notes that although neither Teresa of Avila nor Augustine of Hippo had any academic degrees in biblical studies, they did receive theological and spiritual formation that enabled both to interpret scriptures as a fruit of tapping into the Spirit. In pointing this out, Dubay recognizes that it is sometimes formation and experience rather than education that leads one to understand the meaning behind the Spirit.

The fifth and the sixth areas of authenticity that Dubay outlines can be talked about together. The fifth area, giving advice, is seen as a noble task, and it requires a certain level of virtue. Dubay makes it clear that giving advice is a noble but challenging task primarily because in giving advice, a person can seek to impress, to dominate, or to form the one advised in his or her own image.⁸⁶ This is dangerous because it can lead to a diminished individual relationship and experience with God. The relationship and experience one can have of God is a very intimate thing that should remain as authentic of a relationship as it possibly can between God and the individual. This is why one giving advice must be trained and qualified to give advice and offer counsel in the

⁸⁵ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 32.

⁸⁶ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 33.

spiritual life. Moreover, Dubay states that a spiritual director's intellectual training is important but incomplete if not accompanied by a life of virtue and love. Meanwhile, Dubay's sixth area is seeking advice, realizing that part of the human experience is being dependent on others. Everyone can benefit from the advice or counsel of another, but they must use their best judgment to decide whether or not the advice they are receiving is leading them to live the truth.⁸⁷ He cautions against selecting an advisor who will tell one only what one wants to hear. This is what Dubay is advising here: when seeking advice to turn to reliable sources and always seek to understand the truth.

The seventh manifestation of authenticity is found in speech and silence. In the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible, the person who is deemed holy is one who is well versed in speech.⁸⁸ When one speaks with authority, they are to think carefully of their words and the ways their messages can be interpreted. The person who speaks with authority and authenticity is deemed both honest and simple. Their inspiration comes from moments of silence and prayer. They allow the Spirit to move through them so as to exteriorize their inner truths and feelings, becoming authentic in their word and action.

Dubay's eighth area of authenticity is wide vision, referring to the fact that authentic discerning requires thinking broadly. Often times, people rely on information they are certain they can trust and are blind to other truth around them. This action of limiting receptivity has its issues because one is thinking things through far too narrowly. Prayer and work seek to illuminate the need to think widely and in variation. There are far too many people, according to Dubay, who do not fully accept one of the teachings of Vatican II to "be eager to act and devoted to contemplation" (*SC* no. 2). Most people

⁸⁷ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 33.

⁸⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 33-4.

would choose either contemplation or action because people do not think wide enough, and their minds tend to be too narrow and partial to make authentic decisions.⁸⁹ Dubay believes that it is precisely because of most human beings' inability to think broadly and discern broadly that it is important to seek advice, to think outwardly, and to trust the direction in which the Spirit leads them. This can all be corrected if people start to think outwardly and to trust the direction in which the Spirit leads them.

The ninth area and final area of authentically discerning the Spirit better, according to Dubay, is fidelity to vocation. This is an encouragement to follow the path the Spirit leads you in discovering your vocation. All eight of the steps taken prior to reaching this one is essential in being able to discern one's vocation. Although Dubay does not present much of an argument here, he is calling for a renewed charism of authentic living towards one vocation.

Possibilities and Conditions of Discernment

Much of what Dubay argues as a means of discernment is based on the willingness and reception of the individual seeking to discern. An open mind and heart to the will of the Holy Spirit is an essential aspect of discernment and without it discernment cannot be fruitful. One's ability to identify, acknowledge, and understand the Spirit is an essential element for Dubay's model of discernment. He breaks these possibilities down into two different sections. The first section focuses on the identification of the Spirit and suggests practical elements on approaching a conversation about the Spirit. The second section breaks down a methodology for authentically discerning the Spirit. Dubay frames this section as a continuation of the nine areas of

⁸⁹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 34.

approaching discernment. He does this by offering practical methods stemming from sources including Scripture and the writings of both John of the Cross and Ignatius of Loyola, examining them from a more contemporary lens.

The first section of possibilities of discernment concerns what Dubay terms critical discrimination. “How do we tell one who is led by God from one led by himself, by the world, by the Evil One?”⁹⁰ The importance of discernment is evident throughout the New Testament, especially in the epistles of Paul (Rom 8:14, 1 Th 5:19-22).⁹¹ Dubay enumerates seven practical suggestions for critical discrimination.

The first he terms “hard-nosed evidence.” In the spiritual life, this takes the form of holiness. As mentioned in a previous section, the role of a spiritual director can help illuminate a path forward in discerning the Spirit. “A competent spiritual director,” Dubay explains, “looks for gospel holiness before he accepts that his client is ‘listening to the Spirit.’”⁹² Someone who is vain is probably not listening authentically to the Spirit, which is why Dubay advocates for being humble and earnest of heart because God speaks to the “little ones.”⁹³ One must be attentive to how they experience emotions and events both internally and externally, making sure that neither is being neglected. If either is neglected, it would be very difficult to discern authentically.

The second recommendation that Dubay discusses is that there is no finite idea that expresses God adequately and “thus we out not to cling to it.”⁹⁴ John of the Cross emphasized that the most important element in divine communication is “not the clear

⁹⁰ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 107

⁹¹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 113.

⁹² Dubay, *Authenticity*, 114

⁹³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 114.

⁹⁴ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 114

idea, the detailed course of action to be followed.”⁹⁵ Rather, “it is the love-penetrated touch of the divine in dark faith, a touch that itself communicates humility, love, prayer, strength, peace, joy. The most valuable gift God can share with anyone is himself.”⁹⁶ John of the Cross recommends that one does not get so caught up in searching for a finite means of communication or look down on others whom they believe are not enlightened by the Spirit to communicate with God.⁹⁷ Instead, one is recommended to remain open and aware of the Spirit, discerning the non-verbal messages that God is communicating towards creation. Life is a pilgrimage, argues Dubay, requiring an openness to prayer, love, and the Spirit to come closer to God.

Dubay’s third suggestion is to pay little attention to inner communications such as locutions or visions. Again, he draws from John of the Cross who sheds a lot of light on the subject of how avenues of communication with God work. Interestingly enough, John of the Cross offers a number of reasons why one should be wary about locutions or visions. One reason has to do with the illusions the mind can play on human beings. Here he distinguishes the difference between public and private revelation.⁹⁸ Public revelation occurs around a series of witnesses and therefore is free from illusions, as is the teaching of the divinely commissioned Church (1 Tim 3:15). Meanwhile, private revelation comes with a lot of uncertainty and relativity. What has been revealed to the individual has not been revealed to all, making it harder to decipher whether or not the message is authentic. Paul too mentions this when advising the Galatians to ignore things contrary to what the

⁹⁵ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 114

⁹⁶ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 114.

⁹⁷ John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Dover Publications, 2003) Bk. 2, Chap, 18, no. 2.

⁹⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 116.

Church teaches even if it has been revealed to them by angels (Gal 1:6-9). Dubay states that history has shown John's worries to be true, as it includes a series of illusions that derailed the faithful from living authentically with God. These can be marked as illusions of the false spirit, a theme brought up by Ignatius of Loyola.

The spiritual writings of John of the Cross are noted for their dark, nonconceptual but often potent messages for one's journey in a relationship with God. As noted previously, divine communication does not typically take the form of finite verbal formulas or visions but that does not mean that it is unobtainable. John of the Cross argues that authentically communing with God takes place in dark, non-conceptual, and love-immersed places.⁹⁹ What is being advocated for here is that progression on the pilgrimage towards God occurs in a period of dark faith. If done properly as John of the Cross argues for in entering the "dark nights" of contemplative prayer, the outcomes of authentic communication with God are enormous.

Dubay makes the argument that one who is authentically in communion with God does not need to pay attention to inner communications in the form of locutions or visions. This could lead to vanity, and one may not always have access to a spiritual director to guide one in discernment when one believes inner communications have occurred. Moreover, Dubay states that if one has authentically received communications, "God produces the good effects of his communication without the recipient being able to prevent it."¹⁰⁰ This stems from John of the Cross who writes that a person cannot run or avoid the imparted communication from God because of God's desire to enlighten the

⁹⁹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 117.

¹⁰⁰ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 118.

“spirit of devotion” in all of humanity.¹⁰¹ Being part of the pilgrimage towards God is meant to allow oneself to be transformed by the Spirit that is dormant in everyone waiting to be glorified by God (2 Cor 3:18).¹⁰²

The fourth practical suggestion that Dubay enumerates is the use of ordinary means and “reason as a source of light.” In the case, for example of a broken leg, one should consult with a physician in addition to continuing a practice of prayer.¹⁰³ Fifth, anyone who believes that he or she has received a private divine communication must submit this to apostolic authority for objective evaluation. In the subjective realm, there is great likelihood of illusion and misinterpretation. The gifts of the Spirit are not to be suppressed but they do need to be tested (1 Th 5:19-22).¹⁰⁴ Sixth, it is important to have a competent spiritual director. This director will be attuned to Pauline criteria of gifts of the Spirit including love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:19-22).¹⁰⁵ Finally, this path will lead to growth in faith and holiness. “The more we are transformed by faith and love,” Dubay concludes this section, “the more God can pour out additional light and love into our hearts and minds.”¹⁰⁶

The second section addressing possibilities and conditions of discernment discusses different approaches required for discerning the Spirit properly. Dubay acknowledges that discernment can be demanding, but this demand does not seek to cripple one but to enlighten one’s understanding of God in their lives. Approaching discernment of the Holy Spirit is much like approaching a recipe; one cannot make the

¹⁰¹ John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk. 2, Chap. 17, no. 9.

¹⁰² Dubay, *Authenticity*, 122.

¹⁰³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 119.

¹⁰⁴ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 119.

¹⁰⁵ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 121.

¹⁰⁶ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 122.

meal without the proper ingredients.¹⁰⁷ It is foolish for one to assume that God's criteria for enlightenment are on the same level as those of human beings. Dubay believes that human beings focus a lot on research, libraries, accreditations, degrees, and institutions as means of being enlightened. God does not need a path such as that towards enlightenment. Discernment is demanding but it is not impossible especially if one is both receptive and ready for the truth revealed in God. Revelation tells us that not all of humanity is ready for such truths but those who are obedient and humble are well prepared for God's truth. Dubay reminds the reader that the ways of humanity are not the ways of God, making it harder to understand the authentic truths of God without being God himself.¹⁰⁸

An aspect of Dubay's paradigm that has been brought up previously in this thesis is the humility required for discernment. He argues that one must approach discernment listening with humility to the divine mind. The divine mind is inaccessible when one approaches God with arrogance. Humility is a condition for discernment because within it there is a simpleness that is the pathway to authentic prayer (CCC 2559).¹⁰⁹ The strategy for this effort is to not approach discernment as one who assumes to know so much about God, God's voice, God's movements, etc. Instead, it would be proper for one to acknowledge that they know little to nothing about God, entering into prayer with no expectations. As Dubay continues to bring up throughout *Authenticity*, those who piously claim that they have received private revelations of God may have experienced only a subjective illusion; in any case, even if a divine communication is authentic, they are

¹⁰⁷ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 123.

¹⁰⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 125.

¹⁰⁹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 127.

misled if this becomes an occasion for pride. Humility is essential to hearing and discerning the Spirit primarily because it requires a certain level of vulnerability to open oneself to God. Being vulnerable requires relinquishing a level of pride one naturally has. Only when someone does this can they actively discern God's will.

Another condition of discernment emphasized by Dubay is a willingness to welcome correction and admonition. He notes that Scripture stresses the importance of accepting instruction from others (Prov 1:8; 4:1, 10, 13; 6:20-23; 15:5; 1 Th 5:14-15). Mutual correction is done not in an adversarial manner but with the intention to prevent a member of a community from causing further harm to himself, herself, or others. Correction should be done privately with patience and wisdom. The person receiving correction should do so with the virtue of docility, which is the mean between the extreme of refusing to learn from another and the other extreme of an "exaggerated credulity that has lost a sense of proper discrimination and healthy criticism."¹¹⁰

Fruits and Signs of the Holy Spirit

Another aspect of Dubay's paradigm that is important for discernment is distinguishing the fruits and signs of the Holy Spirit. Fruits and signs of the Holy Spirit are indications of the presence of God at work, which can take a series of different forms.¹¹¹ When one orients the fruits of the Spirit into their habitual daily life, they bear a great witness of the resurrection. All of creation is rooted in the Spirit and when creation, specifically humans both radiate and communicate Christ's life to all around.¹¹² The Church believes that the fruits of the Spirit are actively present by the grace of Baptism

¹¹⁰ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 138.

¹¹¹ Thomas Keating, *Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit* (New York: Lantern Books, 2000), 13.

¹¹² Keating, *Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit*, 13.

and grow in maturity through Confirmation.¹¹³ By the work of the fruits of the Holy Spirit one is able to be renewed and fulfilled with the divine energy encompassed by the Gospel's message. Cistercian Thomas Keating believes that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are the proof that Christ is alive with humanity as witnesses of God's continued *agape* for his creation.¹¹⁴ In Dubay's paradigm, signs of the Holy Spirit are broken down into three different categories: moral behavior signs, doctrinal signs, and communal signs.

Moral Behavior

Moral behavior can be found all throughout the scripture. Dubay chooses to highlight certain messages from the New Testament that develop his understanding of the goodness that leads to authentic discernment of the Holy Spirit and that is also its fruit. Dubay uses the analogy of a good tree producing good fruit; so too, a good spirit produces a good man, and Dubay highlights the way that the faithful have discerned what is good and bad (Mt 7:15; 12:34-35).¹¹⁵ If one is to discern properly, one must hold true to God's word and be held accountable for one's own actions, which requires moral behavior. A moral conscience and inner spirit is better attuned to discern the Holy Spirit because of its ordered direction and training to know what is good.

The first sign of moral behavior is God-directedness. The argument made here is that God is pure goodness and by that nature one's attitude towards discernment should be ordered around God. Dubay writes that it is necessary for a person to possess both self-confidence and decision-making abilities in order to properly discern the Holy Spirit with authenticity. This can lead one to both question and prod at different messages one

¹¹³ Keating, *Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit*, 16.

¹¹⁴ Keating, *Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit*, 23.

¹¹⁵ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 144.

believes to be from the Spirit. Decisions should only be made if one is living out the gospel's message of goodness.¹¹⁶ This message enables the human person to discern and be transformed into a “new creation” that is directed towards God. Dubay points to the New Testament as a reference stating that scripture calls for one to not only observe and adhere to natural law but to proceed farther “even to heights so sublime that unaided reason could not possibly suspect them.”¹¹⁷ In the Spirit, one lives in such a way that everything is ordered towards God.¹¹⁸ An example of this sign of the Holy Spirit in this transformation process can be found in Jesus's passion and his commitment to do the will of God.¹¹⁹ When one opens themselves to the discernment of the Spirit, they will notice that their actions and thoughts become oriented towards a Trinitarian center.¹²⁰ When the Spirit dwells in the hearts of humanity, human persons are able to direct their being towards God and become fully alive and animated. This glorification of God in the Spirit is a criterion for discernment: “To what extent can I say that I do all for the glory of God, to please him: this particular type of recreation, this purchase of clothing, this pleasure trip?” Dubay asks. “Is it really for the glory of God or is it for myself?”¹²¹

The second sign of moral behavior in Dubay's discernment paradigm is the new love that is found in the Spirit. Love is an internal reality that everyone possesses and desires. At first glance, noticing love is challenging but Dubay argues that love makes its invisible presence known through actions.¹²² The love that the Holy Spirit has exists within one's own heart. In this love that Dubay refers to as *agape*, the Holy Spirit is

¹¹⁶ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 147.

¹¹⁷ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 147.

¹¹⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 147.

¹¹⁹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 147.

¹²⁰ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 148.

¹²¹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 149.

¹²² Dubay, *Authenticity*, 149.

disclosed to an individual (Rom 5:5). *Agape* creates goodness where goodness had been absent.

Signs of this *agape* love emphasized in Scripture include behavior that is patient and kind. *Agape* love is not jealous, conceited, proud, irritable, ill-mannered, or selfish (1 Cor 13:4-7). It is generous, cheerful, sincere, and warm (Rom 12:8-10). It blesses those who persecute and does not repay evil with evil but conquers it with good (Rom 12:14, 17, 21). It forgives in the merciful manner of God.¹²³ Obvious ways in which these signs are evident in modern life, Dubay continues, include warmth, care, sensitivity to feelings, and sacrifice. A less well-known sign is the capacity to criticize the actions of another person lovingly. Dubay uses the example of Catherine of Siena to illustrate this “tough love” that one can have in the Spirit. He encourages the reader to see that Catherine of Siena’s decision to disapprove of the Pope’s residence in Avignon while at the same time loving the pontiff as “Christ on earth” contained all the marks of the Spirit.¹²⁴ This caring love that is centered around God and guided by the Spirit is the new love that Dubay demonstrates as the second sign of the Holy Spirit.

The third moral sign of behavior that is the fruit of the Spirit is called cross-asceticism. Dubay frames this sign as pervasive throughout the whole New Testament in a variety of ways. If this sign of the Holy Spirit is lived correctly, there should be an acknowledgement of the rightly ordered motivation for both suffering and asceticism. Dubay points out that an outsider would see this sign as nothing more than madness, but

¹²³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 150.

¹²⁴ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 152. Dubay states that the marks of the Spirit in the case of Catherine of Siena plays into this discernment paradigm he is trying to illustrate. He classifies the marks of the Spirit as containing the following: being made with reluctance, moderation, gentleness, accuracy, and love. All of these are avenues by which the Spirit should be discerned and the view of the new love that is found within understanding the Spirit.

in actuality the outsider has not come to terms with the truth contained in the Word and the influence of the Spirit.¹²⁵ The focus of this sign is around the relationship between the Spirit and the cross. The cross and the Spirit are purifying elements of the Christian life, each requiring a certain level of challenge to both understand and accept. Dubay argues that suffering is a pivotal point to understanding the cross because it strips one of egoism in order to make love possible.¹²⁶ He continues by stating that it is precisely through this suffering that one is able to receive greater gifts of the Spirit than previously were possible. In principle, one is to surrender themselves at the foot of the cross and to allow the Spirit to channel through them as a work of liberation.

The fourth sign for Dubay is frugality. He begins by writing about how this element may seem foreign to some readers, but it is a very relevant sign in today's world.¹²⁷ In the Gospels, when Jesus taught about the relationship between poverty and authenticity, he was met with awe because his message was contra to the belief of the time. Poverty, for Dubay, is freely chosen, and frugality is distinct from destitution. Christ's message that those who have acquired wealth will have difficulty getting into the kingdom of heaven was a radical message for the time. However, this message is a fundamental principle for Christians to understand and experience because material possession and wealth can hinder their relationship with God and the Church, and they need to seek the correct path. Dubay argues that the path that the people of God should be

¹²⁵ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 153. Dubay admits that it is beyond our scope to develop details of the ascetical lifestyle. This leads him to say little about exactly why asceticism and suffering are key elements to understanding the will of the Spirit outside of it being a sign of the Spirit's presence.

¹²⁶ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 154.

¹²⁷ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 154-5. Dubay is commenting on how today's world is focused on the use of resources, primarily commenting the excessive use of natural resources. The reason for commenting on this is because if humanity continues using the amount that they are there will come a day when everyone will have to be frugal. For Dubay, frugality is not avoidable and must be a principle that everyone become accustomed to before it is too late.

on is led by the Holy Spirit because with the Spirit one is closer to being in communion with God.¹²⁸ He continues by talking about how in the Church today there is a strong emphasis placed on poverty, and that the Church itself should practice voluntary poverty. An example of both poverty and frugality can be found in praying the Liturgy of the Hours office of readings for the Christmas season. For example, the December 31st office refers to Christ's birth in circumstances of poverty. The Church then prays, "that poverty may shine brilliantly in your Church."¹²⁹ Dubay wraps up this message of frugality by stating that those who have listened to the Spirit know what it means to be frugal because it will show through their lives.

The fifth sign of the Holy Spirit for Dubay is uncluttered freedom, which comes as a result of God's intrinsic respect for the human person. A requirement that one must meet in order to see this sign of the Holy Spirit is to unclutter their own wants and desires to see the graces that God has bestowed upon them. Dubay argues here that the Holy Spirit is hard to recognize in a "stopped-up" person.¹³⁰ It is the freedom of the person to unclutter both one's interior and exterior lives to make room for the Spirit because by its nature the Holy Spirit is meant to fill the empty spaces of one's life and to encourage one to always seek Christ through the Cross.¹³¹

Doctrinal

The sixth sign of the Holy Spirit for Dubay is sound doctrine. Dubay finds multiple attestations of the criterion of sound doctrine in scripture as he examines the

¹²⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 156. Dubay makes reference here to 1 Tim 6:7-8. He continues by stating that there is no need for materials and fine clothing because in the Spirit they are all cared for. One just needs to acknowledge and be able to discern the will of the Spirit in order to receive passage into the kingdom.

¹²⁹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 157.

¹³⁰ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 158.

¹³¹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 158-9.

inner power given to the Israelite prophets from God (Ezek 36:26f; Jer 31:33).¹³² This message of an inner power is revisited when Christ reveals that the inner power is in fact the Holy Spirit. From here, the Holy Spirit is a guiding and teaching principle of Christ and his Church's mission.¹³³ In the context of conflicts in the community of Corinth, Paul will eventually push for a sound doctrine that is directed by the Holy Spirit claiming that no one can utter a false claim about Christ if the Spirit is directing them (1 Cor 12:3). This is important to understand because Dubay moves from talking about the Spirit directing the early Church into how to distinguish the Spirit. Dubay finds the answer to this question of how to distinguish the Holy Spirit in one of John's letters, where he expresses the union one has with others who articulate and practice the faith (1 John 1:3).¹³⁴ Those who walk on the illuminated path know when the Spirit is guiding them and calling them to perform a certain action for the sake of their community and Church. For Dubay, one must have doctrinal fidelity to the ecclesial teachings of the Church when discerning. The Holy Spirit would never lead an individual to go against the teachings of the Church. According to Dubay, a decision made in contradiction to magisterial teaching is a "clear indicator of inauthenticity, for the Holy Spirit does not lead the individual to reject the teaching of the very leaders he himself has established to protect the truth."¹³⁵

The seventh sign, also within the category of doctrinal criteria, is to be "at odds with the prevailing Spirit of the World." Dubay explains that God is not seen as a popular figure by some of the world. "The majority of men and women neither acclaim the

¹³² Dubay, *Authenticity*, 161.

¹³³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 161. Dubay notes this by discussing the division amongst the early communities and the need for them to distinguish between a true teacher and a false one.

¹³⁴ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 163.

¹³⁵ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 165.

undiluted gospel nor seem to make extraordinary efforts to live it,”¹³⁶ and this, writes Dubay, should come as no surprise to those who have read the Gospels. Old Testament prophets like Amos were neither accepted nor appreciated just as later in the New Testament Jesus would not be accepted. The way of Jesus is a hard road and a narrow gate (Mt 7:13-14). Dubay proposes the question: if the prophets and Jesus were not always accepted and appreciated then why would one assume that God would be? Dubay states that the pattern of rejection of God or teachings of the Church is accepted as normal in our culture, which is why when one upholds the message of the Spirit they should be looked to as an example.¹³⁷ Being at odds with the world is normal for one living the gospel because of the world’s often misguided intellectual and moral life, leading to doctrinal truths being pushed aside because of their opposition towards the modern “feel good” attitude. Overall, the seventh sign praises those who persevere through severe opposition towards the Spirit in modern society.¹³⁸ This framework is important for Dubay’s model precisely because the Spirit and the Church share a misunderstood character to such a degree that those who follow the way of Christ will often be questioned and even persecuted. Those who recognize the necessity of the Spirit in the world and seek to further its guiding messages uphold the Spirit as a divine light that guides one to a closer relationship with God.¹³⁹

Communal Criteria

The eighth sign of the Holy Spirit for Dubay is unity. The unity that Dubay writes about is rooted in the community of the Church (Jn 17:23). The communal criteria for

¹³⁶ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 167.

¹³⁷ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 167.

¹³⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 170.

¹³⁹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 170.

discerning the Holy Spirit can be found within the unity and “absolute perfectness of the Trinity.”¹⁴⁰ Dubay breaks down Jesus’ affirmation “with me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realize that it was you who sent me” (Jn 17:23) into four main points. The first is that unity is unique and complete so much so that nothing lacks in it. The second is that unity is established in the unbreakable oneness of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit).¹⁴¹ The third point is that through unity the presence of the Lord flows within both the Church and community. Finally, the fourth point is what Dubay calls a “miraculous unity” from which the world can know the Incarnation actually took place, being that nothing other than God could cause that “they may be one as we are one.”¹⁴² In examining all of these points, Dubay also points out that a unifying principle of the Church and Spirit is the sacrament of the Eucharist. He concludes that those who resist unity, by nature, resist the Eucharist itself.¹⁴³ Discerning the will of the Spirit in light of Dubay’s argument encourages the people of God to become of one heart and of one mind (Acts 4:32).

The ninth and final sign of the Holy Spirit that Dubay distinguishes is entitled obedience freely given. He argues that one who obeys and respects their superiors obeys God and the community filled with the Holy Spirit. Following the example of Christ, one is encouraged to follow the direction of authority and in so doing they express a certain level of authenticity to their community (i.e., the Church).¹⁴⁴ Paul’s letters stress the importance of following and complying with the authority of the Spirit primarily because

¹⁴⁰ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 172.

¹⁴¹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 172.

¹⁴² Dubay, *Authenticity*, 173. Dubay comments here that the world can conclude that the Incarnation had taken place quoting, “that they may be one as we are one.”

¹⁴³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 173.

¹⁴⁴ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 179.

the Spirit, if properly discerned, cannot lead someone astray. Obedience to the Spirit and the Church are essential to understanding the message and purpose of the Spirit. Dubay encourages one to be obedient to the authority and mission of the Church because, as has been said before, the Spirit is a gift to the Church.

Authentically Verifying the Holy Spirit

Verifying the Spirit in Dubay's paradigm can occur both internally and externally. When discussing internal verification of the Holy Spirit's message, Dubay is referring largely to the way one discerns as an individual. In turn, when Dubay talks about external discernment practices, he is referring to a communal path of discernment. Harmony between both the individual experience and the communal experience is normal.¹⁴⁵ Dubay continues discussing both the internal and external verifications of discerning the Spirit creating a clear image of overlapping principles.

When talking about verifying the Spirit internally, Dubay introduces the tranquility of God's *shalom* (peace) that occurs when one is engulfed in the Spirit.¹⁴⁶ In experiencing the *shalom* of God, one finds that making choices that are wise brings further peace. This is not only a feeling but an extension emanating from a decision the Holy Spirit directs one to make. One feels good, at peace, and joyful precisely because one is following the will of the Spirit.¹⁴⁷ If a decision from the Spirit is truly authentic, then there should not be any confusion or concern that the actions that were taken were wrong. Paul talks about this feeling of security and confidence with God because one of the principles of God is that "God is not a God of disorder but of peace" (1 Cor 14:32-

¹⁴⁵ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 216.

¹⁴⁶ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 218-20.

¹⁴⁷ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 221.

33). Therefore, the inner verification one receives is a religious experience of deep consolation.¹⁴⁸ Ignatius of Loyola wrote of this feeling of consolation as a means to make practical decisions through systematic means as he saw himself as a pilgrim on a constant search for God's truth.¹⁴⁹

In regard to the outer verification discussed by Dubay, this is a form of protection from people who would invalidate the practice of discernment and the Spirit's message. This form of protection creates commonality amongst Christians, which eventually leads to the establishment of a community. Communal discernment, which Dubay believes can be a result of a people opening themselves to the Holy Spirit, occurs as a result of responding to the outer verification of authentically discerning the Spirit. In similar vein, Ladislav Orsy writes that the communal path towards discernment is only as good as its members, which is why at a certain level members of the community must be aware of their limitations in discernment.¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

In Chapter Four, I will describe how one particular religious community—the Marianist fathers and brothers in Dayton, Ohio—experience and practice discernment of the Holy Spirit. In preparation for this discussion, Chapter Three will address the importance of ethnographic research in theology and describe the ethnographic methods used in my study of the practice of discernment in the Marianist community.

¹⁴⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 222.

¹⁴⁹ William J. Walsh, reviewing Piet Penning de Vries *Discernment of Spirits According to the Life and Teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (*Theological Studies*, December 1973): 728.

¹⁵⁰ Ladislav Orsy, *Probing the Spirit: A Theological Evaluation of Communal Discernment* (New Jersey: Dimensions Books): 25.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPORTANCE OF FIELDWORK IN THEOLOGY

When conducting research, one can often think of tests being conducted with labs or searching through a series of library stacks and online databases to find the right books and articles for one's topic. If one thinks about how a theologian conducts research one would probably imagine a desk filled with books, a computer, a small lamp, and occasionally a cup of black coffee to get the mind moving. This is very much what my workspace looks like right now as I am writing this chapter, but libraries and online databases are not the only sources of research that theologians may use. Much of the theology that scholars use originated from direct observation of natural and social events (i.e., the Wisdom literature in Scripture).¹⁵¹ Theology is a discipline that enables a human being to advance beyond their particular framework and assumptions, whatever those may be, in pursuit of what is real and true.¹⁵² This advancement toward the truth often occurs when one experiences an event of some kind that has been recorded in some form. Theology cannot be put within the confines of a box because if one is to believe that theology is the noblest of the sciences, as Thomas Aquinas argues, then it should incorporate elements of all forms of knowledge including the social sciences.¹⁵³ The third chapter of this thesis will demonstrate the benefits of fieldwork within the study of theology. In doing so, this chapter will first discuss Sarah Coakley's theological method *théologie totale* and its emphasis on fieldwork within the discipline of systematic

¹⁵¹ Sharen and Vigen, ed., *Ethnography as Christina Theology and Ethics*, 3.

¹⁵² Sharen and Vigen, ed., *Ethnography as Christina Theology and Ethics*, 3

¹⁵³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911-1925), Ia, q.1, art 2.

theology. From there this chapter will use the work of Robert Orsi to demonstrate the importance of field work in religious studies and Catholic studies. The chapter will then introduce some of the methods of ethnography and some of the virtues and values important to the use of ethnography within the study of theology.

Sarah Coakley and *Théologie Totale*

Sarah Coakley is an English Anglican priest and theologian and the Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity Emerita at the University of Cambridge. She received her doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 1983. Coakley authored and edited numerous works while maintaining teaching careers at universities including Oxford, Harvard, and Princeton. Her work *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* was published in 2013 and is the first of an intended multi-volume systematic theology employing her method, *théologie totale*. This section of this chapter will introduce her method and then highlight an aspect of her approach that has influenced this thesis.

It is Coakley's belief that theology must prioritize the Spirit through a Trinitarian framework. In the very first chapter of *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, Coakley addresses three different critiques of systematic theology. The first critique that Coakley addresses is that of 'ontotheology': the belief that systematic theology idolatrously makes God an object possessed by human knowledge. She argues that a *théologie totale* avoids this error in that it is a contemplative practice of 'un-mastery' and a "disciplined form of unknowing." Through ascetic practice and transformation, the theologian is open to "a new and deeper knowledge-beyond-knowledge."¹⁵⁴ The second critique that Coakley addresses is the belief that systematic theology is a totalizing and hegemonic suppression

¹⁵⁴ Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay "On the Trinity"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 43

of the voices of marginalized peoples. She answers this critique by noting that the method of *théologie totale* includes both a contemplative practice that requires a moral and epistemic stripping and an attempt to include all forms and types of religious expression and experience, including voices that have been marginalized by the tradition. The third critique of systematic theology arises from French psychoanalytic thought and faults the field of systematic theology for being “phallogentric,” ordered by a ‘male’ mode of thinking that aims to control and master. Coakley addresses this by emphasizing that a *théologie totale* integrates the arts and the aesthetic dimensions of human experience. Moreover, in its practice of unknowing, a *théologie totale* courts the realm of the unconscious. Systematic theology has difficulties in modern scholarship because it does not always encompass a holistic style of human thinking, which is why Coakley introduces her method of *théologie totale* to expand the approach to systematic theology in contemporary scholarship.

Coakley defines *théologie totale* as “a new form of systematic theology that attempts to incorporate insights from every level of society and to integrate intellectual, affective, and imaginative approaches to doctrine and practice.”¹⁵⁵ *Théologie totale* has several different elements in hopes of bridging the gap between theology and people today. One aspect of her method is prayer. Prayer is the root of the contemplative practice essential to Coakley’s method of *théologie totale* and her trinitarian theology. *Théologie totale*, according to Coakley, is to be found within “the bodily practices of contemplation, which court the ‘unconscious’ and summons into new attentiveness those

¹⁵⁵ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 352.

dimensions of human response which go beyond the verbal or the propositional.”¹⁵⁶ This means that Coakley’s method attends to a number of varying mediums including academic theology and philosophy, dogmatic understandings, the arts, and the pastoral elements of theology. God then becomes apparent in everything, whether that be art, poetry, etc. God becomes the focus of human life and the root of causation. Just like an orchestra, Coakley’s method has varying elements that come together to produce a beautiful composition. Coakley sees contemplation as a practice of prayer one returns to time and time again. Contemplation enables one to pay close attention to the way the Spirit works in one’s life that is neither elitist nor something to be feared.¹⁵⁷ Coakley demonstrates the need for the practice of prayer by discussing the role that prayer plays in Saint Paul’s reflection on the Holy Spirit in Romans 8.¹⁵⁸

Théologie totale seeks to encourage one to recognize that contemplation is not a way to validate a ‘religious experience’ but instead to be open to the ‘whole self.’ The ‘whole self’ for Coakley includes the will, intellect, memory, imagination, feelings, and bodiliness of the human person.¹⁵⁹ This aspect of *théologie totale* gives one the ability to be attentive towards and acknowledge God in creation, but not to fully understand God. Following this understanding for Coakley is a continuing journey of transformation and change in one’s theological perspective.

¹⁵⁶ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 90-91.

¹⁵⁷ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 88. Although, Coakley addresses paying close attention to the way the Holy Spirit word she does not claim that one comes to understand the Holy Spirit. For Coakley the Holy Spirit cannot be understood but one possesses the ability to recognize the Holy Spirit.

¹⁵⁸ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 113-4. Coakley does not hold the belief that the Holy Spirit can be understood. Instead, Coakley believes that the Holy Spirit can be recognized.

¹⁵⁹ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 88.

Théologie totale does not claim to subsume secular science and philosophy into itself. The theologian affirms a distinction of nature and grace; only God has the power and authority to ‘take over’ nature according to Coakley.¹⁶⁰ Human theology does not possess the authority of God, but through the Spirit humanity is able to actively participate in God. Theology in the case of *théologie totale* is both purified and expanded by desire and contemplation in an ongoing relation to revelation and grace.¹⁶¹ *Théologie totale* remains in consistent dialogue with both science and philosophy so much so that Coakley sees the need for theology to change so as to address contemporary topics and issues. Coakley’s approach is directed by the Spirit and she even states that the Spirit “blows where it wills” (Jn 3:8), meaning that if one is to accept that the Spirit directs theology then so too does theology change with the direction of the Spirit.¹⁶²

Orthodoxy is a goal for *théologie totale* especially in regard to theology’s response to revelations of divine truth. True orthodoxy is not only creedal correctness but unites different theological elements such as spirituality, ethics, and personal transformation. Coakley acknowledges that this approach to orthodoxy can be considered dangerous in that it may raise suspicions of monastic or intellectual elitism or the resistance of ecclesial or political powers. When orthodoxy loses its integrity, it results in a severe spiritual cost.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 88-9.

¹⁶¹ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 89.

¹⁶² Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 89.

¹⁶³ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 90. Coakley does not go into depth about how the loss of integrity in orthodoxy comes at a severe spiritual cost. However, if I was to assume what Coakley means here, I would say that her scholarship is rooted in early patristic writings that discuss the beauty of orthodoxy. As mentioned previously, Coakley holds prayer and the ascetical life in high regard, especially in approaching *théologie totale*. The spiritual life and method of prayer one has in approaching theology will ultimately have an impact on one’s own adaptation of orthodoxy and if one’s perspective is compromised then one’s spirituality can also be affected.

Coakley's method also serves as an expansion of the loci of classic systematic theology. *Théologie totale* incorporates all the classical *loci* including God, the Trinity, Christ, the Spirit, anthropology, sin, salvation, the church, and the sacraments but may superimpose or conjoin these *loci* in fresh ways.¹⁶⁴ It also adds new *loci* as needed to reinvigorate systematic theology in conversation with contemporary scholarship. For example, *théologie totale* as practiced with Coakley's new *loci* enriches the doctrine of the human person with attention to gender and sexuality, and the treatment of sin and the understanding of salvation is enhanced by addressing issues regarding both race and social class.¹⁶⁵

Théologie totale attends to several different aspects of both theology and the human person. Of course, Coakley's method is concerned with academic theology, church teachings, and what is preached by ministers, but it also attends to that which is expressed aesthetically in culture, art, poetry, music and liturgy.¹⁶⁶ In seeking to address all of these mediums in *théologie totale*, Coakley believes that certain divine truths are demonstrated that could not be showcased by any other means. *Théologie totale* overcomes the false divides that exist within scholarship and the separation between academia and the pastoral life of the church. Coakley states that the way her method is

¹⁶⁴ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 90. Coakley notes that *théologie totale* addresses these topics in a contemporary manner but not in this necessary order.

¹⁶⁵ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 90.

¹⁶⁶ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 90. Sarah Coakley seeks to address each of these points in her other volumes of systematic theology. In this particular volume of her systematic theology, she addressed art. However, moving forward into her future volumes, she plans on addressing the following: poetry in volume II; music in volume III; summation and liturgy in volume IV.

able to do this is because of its contemplative nature that redirects the energy that fuels these dividing conflicts.¹⁶⁷

Coakley describes her method as socially located but not socially reduced. What she means by this is that by its very nature *théologie totale* considers every layer of society where doctrine is received.¹⁶⁸ This aspect of Coakley's *théologie totale* is an encouragement of the integration of the social sciences in theology and the practice of fieldwork. Coakley states the following: "the recovery of a creative *and* critical relation of theology to the social sciences is a vital one for a *théologie totale*. Provided the secular reductive pretensions of classic sociology of religion are undercut, sociology can continue to unearth 'in the field' both ecclesiastical embarrassments *and* hidden treasure for theology."¹⁶⁹ The "hidden treasure" may be something that has been overlooked in theology that has the ability to offer a new perspective on a theological topic or question. The "embarrassment" may be a pathology in theology or ecclesial life. The encouragement for fieldwork comes as no surprise because Coakley's theology has been heavily influenced by Ernst Troeltsch, whose work inspired her to conduct her own fieldwork research into the charismatic differences in two churches located in Northern England.¹⁷⁰ Coakley's method was influenced by this work because in conducting this

¹⁶⁷ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 91. "It is an implication of this method that we must no longer rend 'practical' or 'pastoral' theology apart from 'systematic theology' and 'philosophical theology.' For they have always -properly- belonged together; and any systematic theology worth having must prove how it works in the field, and -conversely- how what happens in the field both challenges and reinvigorates its systematic tasks."

¹⁶⁸ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 90.

¹⁶⁹ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 76. "This is because the wider real of 'doctrine' has many levels, mediums of expression, and spheres of response—not merely those enshrined in the official creeds and re-enunciated by theologians and church leaders. *Théologie totale* aims to dig down the social tell of doctrine, even as it simultaneously purges and unifies the engaged theologian's faculties in response to that."

¹⁷⁰ "Charismatic Experience: Praying 'In the Spirit,'" *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Doctrine Commission of the Church of England (London: Church House Publishing, 1991).

hands-on research she was able to see how doctrine functions and develops in a practical sense. This is why she views that a proper theological approach such as hers is practical.¹⁷¹ The fundamental desire of a person of faith exploring theology should be to seek God's 'face' while keeping their methods and approaches questioned, examined, and in check.¹⁷² This thesis that uses ethnography to distinguish how the Holy Spirit is discerned within a community of faith was inspired by this element of Coakley's method.

Robert Orsi and Fieldwork on 115th Street

Robert Orsi in his second edition of *The Madonna of 115th Street* addresses the critique Orsi received from other theologians and historians about his use of oral history in his research.¹⁷³ Religion and culture exist through lived experience and hence these should be areas of study. Orsi's book focuses on the annual Italian American festival of the Madonna of Mount Carmel in Harlem, New York.¹⁷⁴ Orsi acknowledges that this book would not have been possible if he had not been able to partake in the culture of Italian Americans as part of his research. The celebration of the Madonna of Mount Carmel could not be understood outside Orsi's participation in the community that has this devotion to the Madonna.¹⁷⁵ Everything about the event has significance from the

¹⁷¹ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 45.

¹⁷² Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 45.

¹⁷³ Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). See page xiii. Orsi acknowledges that he has been criticized for the way he is telling the history of Italian Harlem, especially being that most of the information he is receiving has been orally passed down from one generation to another. In particular, Orsi addresses how approaching history ethnographically was a cause for concern amongst historians. He addresses this by stating that there is a desire among young scholars to address disciplines of history, culture and religion through lived experiences, hence his need to address the study of lived religion as seen on pages xix-xxiv.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Orsi is a native of New York City. Even though he did not grow up in Harlem specifically, he recognized that while conducting his research he had connection to the *domus* of Italian Harlem. This connection aided in his research and the way he was able to connect with the community he was actively participating in.

¹⁷⁵ Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, xiii.

prayer to the gestures and postures of those who participate. Orsi argues that the study of a lived religion has significance within a number of disciplines, one of them being theology. This study enables one to rethink what religion means, directing attention towards “texts and rituals, practices and theology, things and ideas—all as media of making and unmaking worlds.”¹⁷⁶

Orsi believes that religion and culture are inseparable. He views religion as a fundamental aspect of history and culture because it forms the way communities and cultures enact and perceive events and rituals. In fact, Orsi argues that it is not possible to subtract the influence of religion from everyday practices and cultural structures such as the legal, political, and medical systems. Religion is always “religion-in action,” according to Orsi.¹⁷⁷ An example of this would be found within the *festa* and the devotion to the Madonna of Mount Carmel.

After reflection on the inescapability of religion in culture, Orsi continues by arguing for the necessity of fieldwork in his own research within the disciplines of religious studies and theology. Fieldwork comes through the relationship the researcher has with his or her participants, which bring out memories and disappointments through stories and observations.¹⁷⁸ In conducting interviews and observations, Orsi was able to understand better the culture and traditions of Italian Harlem. When referring to “unknown revelations,” Orsi is able to witness these key elements of the Christian faith that are essential and revealing to an outsider but are common to one raised within the culture. Much of his understanding about devotions and the role that religion plays within

¹⁷⁶ Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, xix.

¹⁷⁷ Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, xx.

¹⁷⁸ Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, xxv.

a community changed especially as he came to understand what the *domus* meant and looked like. The *domus* will be addressed later in this section to provide more clarity into Orsi's understanding and perspective of Italian Harlem. The sources that Orsi examines recapture memories and experiences that enable participants to discover new things about themselves and their culture. Outsiders can also learn to see religion in new ways that are common to members of the community but that reveal new perspectives to those who are not. Ethnography enabled Orsi to see that he had much in common with the people he was studying because his process was interpreting arguments, communicating, and understanding what he was learning about the history and culture of Italian Harlem. All of this to say that Orsi, through ethnography, was participating in a process of communication and interpretation in which the people of Eastern Harlem were themselves engaged.¹⁷⁹

The devotion that Orsi examines began in the town of Polla, Italy and was later relocated to New York as a custom of Italian immigrants around 1882. Orsi articulates how this devotion flourished within the Italian communities in Harlem leading up to 1904 when the Madonna of Mount Carmel was elevated to a "Marian sanctuary." At the time of this elevation, there had only been two sanctuaries in the United States, which added to the uniqueness of the devotion in Italian Harlem.¹⁸⁰ Much of this particular devotion to

¹⁷⁹ Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, xxvi. "Ethnographers and the people they live and study among are alike involved in these processes of interpreting, arguing, communicating, and understanding. Scholars of culture step into these rounds, attend to them, and contribute to them as they in turn struggle to understand other people and cultures, to understand themselves in relation to other people, and to communicate what they know and feel."

¹⁸⁰ Orsi seems to suggest that Pope Leo XIII aided in this decision to make the Madonna a unique sanctuary in an attempt to win the ongoing battle against Americanism that the Holy See was having with the United States.

the Madonna of 115th street had never been understood outside of the Italian community, which encouraged Orsi to dive deeper into his research.

Eventually through the use of ethnographic participant interviews, Orsi would see that the heart of the devotion to the Madonna was the *domus* as source of meaning and morals for the community. The *domus* is a cultural element distinctive of these Italian immigrants in Harlem during this period because the *domus* makes the home and family life an aspect of their religion. This immigrant neighborhood practiced Catholicism as a community of extended families and households—each a *domus* that united to create a clear cultural heritage and faith of Italian Harlem. Accompanying the *domus* was a clear set of values, beliefs, and myths that seemed to affect several aspects of the community's life. For example, the *domus* seemed to have an effect on relationships with family members, choosing a partner for marriage for one's children, and even inspired the intercession of saints.

Clearly the *domus* did not just exist within the confines of the church building, as Orsi argues that the *domus* shaped the life of both the streets and homes. This theology demonstrates important elements of Italian American Catholicism. The understanding of the *domus* eventually becomes a staple of the Harlem region. When people of Haitian descent begin to move into the Harlem region, eventually becoming the dominant culture, they continued to practice the *festa* and *domus* tradition and understanding.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ See page xxxiii. Orsi writes about how Haitians and Italians participate in the celebration of the *festa* and *domus* side-by-side. He writes about how at the *festa* Haitians and Italians show great reverence and piety for the Madonna as a community of faith. Each culture brings their own tradition to the *festa* now as Haitians bring a set of Latin hymns that Italians did not learn growing up. The devotion to the Madonna has not changed even with the cultural change of the neighborhood.

Orsi also learned from his field study that the statue of the Madonna and Christ child became an image and a source of refuge for the Italian Americans who were suffering persecution. These Italian immigrants and Americans saw their suffering as identical to the suffering of Christ and as a way to understand the faith.¹⁸² In examining the history of American Catholicism, Orsi sees that a devotional emphasis is very common in American Catholicism. Through the study of the Madonna of 115th street, he asserts with evidence that both devotionals and forms of piety towards the Madonna are key elements to the Catholic Church in America.

Methods of Ethnographic Study

Ethnography is about telling a story. However, what sets ethnography off is that the story is told through the eyes of people who live a certain way of life among their community or culture.¹⁸³ It is required of one practicing ethnography to develop a special lens to analyze and examine habits and events that occur while conducting such research. It is the purpose of the ethnographer to focus on the behavior, thoughts, and daily patterns of human beings.¹⁸⁴

Although ethnography is a research tool and strategy, it is also important to be aware that it is an active process of meaning construction that is interlinked with power dynamics. James Clifford writes that ethnography is “actively situated between powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders. Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of

¹⁸² Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, 221-2.

¹⁸³ David M. Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*, 1.

¹⁸⁴ Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*, 1.

collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes innovation and structuration and is itself part of these processes.”¹⁸⁵

The practice of ethnography is not limited to the group or culture it seeks to explore because ethnographers must make themselves vulnerable enough for inner self-reflection. The vulnerability of the ethnographer is vital for the study because in this vulnerability truth emerges.¹⁸⁶ In using ethnography, the ethnographer takes on the function of the curious learner being guided by the research to understand “what is really real.”¹⁸⁷

In practicing ethnography, there are a number of methods that the researcher can use. These methods are things such as but not limited to participant observation, individual interviews, and extended immersion in a community or culture.¹⁸⁸ The practice of ethnography requires examination of various sources of literature that help demonstrate different methods, qualities, and values of ethnography. Ethnography is very complicated, and its practice requires a lot of planning before initiating a study.

A number of anthropologists have argued that participant observation is a key element of ethnography’s research methods. Bronislaw Malinowski used participant observations to document his experiences among the Trobriand Islanders in the South Pacific during World War I. He defined participant observations as “participating in daily tasks and observing and recording the daily ebb and flow of life.”¹⁸⁹ However, in time,

¹⁸⁵ James Clifford. “Introduction,” 2-3.

¹⁸⁶ Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, ed., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 16.

¹⁸⁷ Sharen and Vigen, ed., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 17.

¹⁸⁸ Sharen and Vigen, ed., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 17.

¹⁸⁹ *Practicing Ethnography: A Students Guide to Method and Methodology*, 34. Malinowski’s definition of participant observation is also defined as an intensive, long-term engagement with a group of people in a singular location. One source has said that classic ethnography requires 6 months to 2 years or more of

this definition of participant observation has evolved and then been broken down into two subgroups. One subgroup is the traditional view of participant observation which coincides with Malinowski's definition of being a part of the participants' day and taking notes. The other subgroup is a contemporary approach to participant observation stemming from the way one views the "field" they wish to study. In other words, researchers can construct their own geographical and ideological boundaries around the people, places, and characteristics that help ground their research.¹⁹⁰

James Spradley, a notable anthropologist and ethnographer, identified five types of participant observations: complete participation, active participation, moderate participation, passive participation, and nonparticipation.¹⁹¹ Complete participation is when ethnographers immerse themselves in the life of the community or culture that they are observing, becoming a part of their lifestyle. Active participation has some similarities to complete participation; however, the ethnographer is not considered to be an insider in the community. In this case, there is some cultural difference between the community and researcher that keeps them apart.¹⁹² The researcher struggles to be looked at as an "insider" amongst the community and these limit certain aspects of their work to observation alone. Moderate participation is when the researcher has very little interaction with the group they are surveilling. This leads the ethnographer to focus

fieldwork to make an accurate ethnographic assessment. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic this was not possible, and my ethnographic research had to be brief with minimum contact.

¹⁹⁰ *Practicing Ethnography: A Students Guide to Method and Methodology*, 35. "More contemporary understandings of the 'field,' however, situate it as a cultural construction of the anthropologist or anthropology student."

¹⁹¹ *Practicing Ethnography: A Students Guide to Method and Methodology*, 37. These five elements have been taken from James Spradley's book *Participant Observation*.

¹⁹² *Practicing Ethnography: A Students Guide to Method and Methodology*, 38. An example of this could be found in the work of either Damian Costello or Robert Orsi, who both immersed themselves within a community to conduct their research. In the case of Costello, he immersed himself among the Lakota people to better understand the community and culture that formed the Black Elk's Catholicism.

mainly on what they observe while conducting their study.¹⁹³ Passive participation is used by making an observation about people or events without the parties' knowledge. This form of participation raises a number of ethical issues and must be restricted to large scale events due to the lack of explicit participant consent.¹⁹⁴ The final form of participant observation that Spradley identifies is called nonparticipation. Researchers who use this form of observation are to neither engage nor interact with the people they are studying. Spradley argues that nonparticipation is inferior to the other forms of observation. He even notes that this kind of observation could be done browsing the internet and watching videos about the group you are studying. For the purposes of my own ethnographic study to be discussed in chapter four of this thesis, I approached participant observation through active participation.

Virtues and Values in the Practice of Ethnography

There are a number of values that accompany ethnography; however, I will highlight five: humility, reflexivity, collaboration, solidarity, and accountability. When practicing ethnography, one should try and be as humble and open to the investigation/immersion one is about to undertake as possible. When one approaches ethnography with an open mind, there begins an exploration of untapped data and potential that has laid dormant in the ethnographer.¹⁹⁵ James Spradley writes about how

¹⁹³ *Practicing Ethnography: A Students Guide to Method and Methodology*, 38. "For example, an anthropologist working in a children's classroom would fall into this category. He or she may wish to examine how a teacher's teaching methods function to gender children, for example. In this case, the researcher would simply watch, observe, record student-teacher interactions, and have minimal contact with the group."

¹⁹⁴ *Practicing Ethnography: A Students Guide to Method and Methodology*, 38. "An example might include being a spectator at a large sporting event and observing and writing notes on the actions, words, clothing, and general behavior of sports fans."

¹⁹⁵ David M. Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*, 2.

in approaching ethnography the ethnographer must not walk into the research thinking they are an expert. Instead, one should always approach ethnography with an open mind to the events they will be witnessing.¹⁹⁶ For academic purposes, the research shows that those who possess academic identities such as Ph.D., M.D., etc. are challenged to give up their status as a teacher to authentically practice ethnography.¹⁹⁷ One shows humility too by accepting that there may be certain elements of a situation or experience that may not make sense to the ethnographer.¹⁹⁸ However, one can find humility in accepting that not understanding is also part of the ethnographic experience.

Another value of ethnography is reflexivity. It is appropriate to keep one's own assumptions in check when conducting ethnographic research. The researcher needs to be willing to examine their own assumptions and biases in approaching either the practice of ethnography or the subjects they are observing. This reflective mentality creates an atmosphere of being open to the outcomes of the study, which may diverge from the originally intended research path. The flexibility to have little intended outcome when approaching ethnography is part of the ethnographic process because during the study one is learning while simultaneously reporting data having no idea what the data will turn up.¹⁹⁹ All this is to say that a reflective and open attitude is required for practicing ethnography.

¹⁹⁶ James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979).

¹⁹⁷ *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 18.

¹⁹⁸ Clifford comments that accepting this is liberating stating the following: "In cultural studies at least, we can no longer know the whole truth, or even claim to approach it. The rigorous partiality I have been stressing here may be a source of pessimism for some readers. But is there not a liberation, too, in recognizing that no one can write about others any longer as if they were discrete objects or texts? And may not the vision of a complex, problematic, partial ethnography lead, not to its abandonment, but to more subtle, concrete ways of writing and reading, to new conceptions of culture as interactive and historical?" Clifford., "Introduction," 25

¹⁹⁹ Sharen and Vigen, ed., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 19-20.

Ethnography's basic principle is examining a community or culture through the use of a number of different voices. Because of this, another value of ethnography is collaboration. Just as a research paper such as this is an examination of a topic through the use of different sources, ethnography requires the same approach because to examine a community or a culture using a singular perspective is an inaccurate way of conducting research. Collaboration also requires a certain level of continued communication with the community you are studying, informing them of the work and direction research is taking. This communication enables the community partaking in the study to offer their continued counsel throughout the examination process. As mentioned previously, there is a possibility that the ethnographer will witness something that they as an outsider will not understand. If communication continues with the participants or community who are the focus of the study, these questions and clarifications are answerable. Continuing to engage, communicate and collaborate with those partaking in the ethnographic study is part of the ethnographic experience.²⁰⁰

The articulation of virtues important to ethnography comes also from theologians employing this method. As mentioned previously in this chapter, Sarah Coakley argues that it is essential for theology to embrace certain methods of the social sciences in order to better dialogue with and learn from actual human experience. Theology cannot be confined to solely textual research and therefore must utilize certain contemporary methodologies such as ethnography. Lorraine Cuddeback-Gedeon writes about the growing interest in the use of ethnography from theologians who see the method as both

²⁰⁰ Sharen and Vigen, ed., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 24.

a way of gathering outside data and as a formation practice.²⁰¹ Cuddeback-Gedeon's argument for ethnography in theology is focused within the paradigm of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), which enables her to present two themes that show up within her approach to theology and ethnography.

The first one is solidarity, which for her is not a controversial approach as solidarity is a basic principle in the social tradition of the Catholic Church. In the case of Latin American liberation theologies, there is a use of solidarity in the ethical analysis of the relationship between the oppressor and those who are oppressed.²⁰² Cuddeback-Gideon identifies four different elements of the relationship that solidarity has with the ethnographer:

- (1) it requires a commitment to the wellbeing of the community which we engage;
- (2) this commitment manifests some kind of 'break' with a theologian's positions of privilege;
- (3) it preserves the agency of the oppressed; and finally
- (4) the theologian dialogs with the community, but must do so while engaging in an ongoing process of humility and reflexivity.²⁰³

This affirms the ethnographic values that have been discussed in this chapter and demonstrates the connection between theology and ethnography.

²⁰¹ Lorraine Cuddeback-Gedeon, "Nothing About Us Without Us: Ethnography, Conscientization, and the Epistemic Challenges of Intellectual Disability." *Practical Matters Journal*, Spring 2018, Issue 11, 1. She understands that her view of ethnography as a tool to collect data and record new experiences was exactly what was missing in different realms of theological discourse.

²⁰² Cuddeback-Gedeon, "Nothing About Us Without Us: Ethnography, Conscientization, and the Epistemic Challenges of Intellectual Disability."10. "For example, Gutiérrez defines solidarity as something which must 'manifest itself in a specific action, a style of life, a break with one's social class;' it is required in order to work for liberation of the poor. Gutiérrez offers an example of this kind of break: voluntary poverty, 'a poverty lived not for its own sake, but rather as an authentic imitation of Christ.' Gutiérrez is not defining solidarity *as* voluntary poverty but raising voluntary poverty as a prime example of what solidarity ought to look like: a sacrifice of the privilege that someone who is not poor enjoys. This sacrifice is what allows the oppressor to join the revolution led by the oppressed: or how an outsider gains a position among insiders. It is no surprise that solidarity plays an essential role for theologians doing ethnography."

²⁰³ Cuddeback-Gedeon, "Nothing About Us Without Us: Ethnography, Conscientization, and the Epistemic Challenges of Intellectual Disability."10.

The second theme that Cuddeback-Gedeon examines is accountability. This theme extends from the ethnographers' struggle to conduct their research while maintaining the status of an outsider. In using the work of Aana Marie Vigen, a fellow ethicist, Cuddeback-Gedeon sees accountability broken down into four differing elements: (1) committing to following up with those participating in the research; (2) offering rich and in-depth descriptions that showcase both the honesty and complexity of the work; (3) placing participants first; and finally (4) the research must matter to the ethnographer and reflect a "positive transformation of society."²⁰⁴ Of course, an element of this accountability also extends to the institution and community that is supporting and participating in this research.²⁰⁵ Telling the story of others in the way that ethnography requires means that the researcher must be dependable, reliable, and communicative, which extends from this theme of accountability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has examined several key points necessary for this thesis. The first was the introduction of Sarah Coakley's theological method of *théologie totale* that inspired the use of fieldwork for this project. A second case was made for the use of ethnography within the study of theology through examining the approach of Robert Orsi. This chapter then introduced ethnography as both a tool for academic research and also a way to examine and offer an enriching understanding of communities

²⁰⁴ Cuddeback-Gedeon, "Nothing About Us Without Us: Ethnography, Conscientization, and the Epistemic Challenges of Intellectual Disability." 11. Aana Marie Vigen, *Women, Ethics, and Inequality in U.S. Healthcare: 'to Court among the Living,'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 90.

²⁰⁵ For example, the research that I have conducted for this thesis is overseen and approved by the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at the University of Dayton. This research too has a level of accountability because the Marianist Province of the United States requires open communication with them while conducting my study in order to be welcomed into their community life.

and cultures. In using ethnography, it is important to know that there are many different forms of the practice, which is why that section reviewed several potential avenues of practicing ethnography. Finally, some of the virtues and ethical principles necessary to the practice of ethnography within the study of theology were identified through examining the approach of Lorraine Cuddeback-Gedeon who has spent time practicing ethnography and sees the benefit and fruit of approaching theology in such a way. It is my intention in this thesis to prove the benefit of fieldwork in the area of discernment. In the next chapter, I will relay the findings from my ethnographic study using active participation in a Marianist community of brothers and priests in the Dayton area to observe the way in which they practice discernment of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER FOUR

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY

“You will never make any progress in virtue if you do not learn to discern the spirit that impels you. Some are never conscious of what takes place within themselves.”²⁰⁶

~Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

In doing this research, I had the opportunity to conduct an ethnographic study of a Marianist community in the Dayton area.²⁰⁷ Prior to beginning this chapter, I would like to again extend my gratitude towards them for their hospitality. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, the Marianists saw that this research was important and took every measure accessible to them to welcome me and make me feel comfortable living with them.²⁰⁸ Throughout the course of this chapter, I give a brief history of the Society of Mary and discuss Marianist spirituality before discussing my research findings. Following the method of ethnographic research, as I begin to discuss my work, I will introduce the framework and environment where I conducted my research. Then I will recount my observations of the community and how the Spirit moves in their prayer and discernment. Finally, I will highlight outcomes from the one-on-one interviews I conducted with different members of the community.

²⁰⁶ William Joseph Chaminade, *Retreat of 1822*, 5th Conference.

²⁰⁷ This research was done in accordance with all the guidelines of the Institutional Research Board at the University of Dayton.

²⁰⁸ Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were certain limitations and time restrictions I faced in conducting this ethnographic research. Prior to my stay with a Marianist community in Dayton, I had prior experience with the Marianists. I attended a Marianist high school on Long Island, New York. While I was in high school, I seriously discerned the possibility of a vocation to the Society of Mary and spent a significant amount of time living and partaking in their community life. I am tremendously grateful for the members of the Province of Meribah on Long Island for those opportunities to be formed in the Marianist charism.

The Society of Mary

The Society of Mary, the Marianists, was founded by William Joseph Chaminade in the wake of the French Revolution between 1789 to 1799. Chaminade created the society to resuscitate a wounded Catholic Church in France as a result of the revolution. Paul Landolfi, a Marianist scholar writing on the history of the Society of Mary, describes Chaminade's experience of this period of French history as frightening.²⁰⁹ Chaminade was a humble diocesan priest who every day in France wondered when the guillotine would come for him. In this concern, he began to plan out a path he would take in response to the lingering persecution. Chaminade went into hiding by buying a cottage in St. Laurent in the name of a gardener he hired so as to not arouse suspicion.²¹⁰ Priests in France during this period were required to sign the Oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy pledging their allegiance to the Church in France as opposed to the Church in Rome.²¹¹ In order to avoid signing the document that went against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and because Chaminade began to take a public stance against the French government, Chaminade went into hiding. However, after six years of hiding, Chaminade was caught and forced into exile from France.²¹² Chaminade then migrated in 1797 to Saragossa, Spain, praying daily at the shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar. It was during his time in Spain at the shrine that Chaminade kindled his faith in the example of St. James and devotion for the Blessed Mother.²¹³ Eventually, this devotion led him to

²⁰⁹ Paul Landolfi, "The Christocentric Chaminade," *NACMS* (Dayton: North American Center for Marianist Studies, 2011).

²¹⁰ Landolfi, "The Christocentric Chaminade."

²¹¹ Landolfi, "The Christocentric Chaminade."

²¹² Landolfi, "The Christocentric Chaminade."

²¹³ Landolfi, "The Christocentric Chaminade."

take up the task of forming a movement of faith communities called sodalities to re-Christianize France.

When Chaminade returned to France, he began his newly established mission by forming the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception in Bordeaux.²¹⁴ He encountered individuals who had been without the sacraments and substantial faith formation for quite some time. The faith was dwindling in the region of Chaminade's ministry which is why he knew he needed to act quickly. The creation of sodalities would be the first of many steps Chaminade would take to revitalize the Christian faith in France. Chaminade followed the mission of the Virgin Mary, seeing his sodalities as following the discipleship model set by the Blessed Mother. Therefore, Chaminade placed his sodalities under the patronage of Mary, founding the first Marianist lay community. Chaminade re-introduced the community to prayer and a relationship with Jesus Christ and to the practices of acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit's role in the community's life.²¹⁵

Chaminade would not formally establish a religious institution of brothers and priests until 1817, which was a year after his companion and friend Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon founded her own congregation of women called the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, or the Marianist Sisters. Then, in 1817, a group of men approached Chaminade requesting a religious institution under his leadership, vision, and dedication to the Blessed Mother, and hence the Society of Mary was created. Chaminade would later state that the mission of the Society of Mary would be: "the most exact conformity possible with Jesus Christ, Son of God become Son of Mary, for the salvation of

²¹⁴ Landolfi, "The Christocentric Chaminade."

²¹⁵ Landolfi, "The Christocentric Christ."

humankind.”²¹⁶ Similar to the Marianist Sisters, the Marianists committed themselves to serve the Church by means of formation and education. Schools began to be founded under the direction of Chaminade and were dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

In 1849, a group of Marianist brothers and priests came to the United States and settled in Cincinnati, Ohio. A year later in 1850, this initial community moved to Northern Dayton and establish St. Mary’s School for Boys. St. Mary’s would later become known as the University of Dayton, a Marianist University run by the Marianist Province of the United States.

The process of becoming a vowed religious in the Society of Mary consists of several steps. The first is the stage of a Marianist “contact,” meaning that a man is in the first formal steps of considering a Marianist vocation. Throughout the course of this process, the “contact” will have the opportunity to live in different Marianist communities to get a sense of their community life. The second stage is becoming an “aspirant,” meaning one begins the formal application process with the order’s vocation director and Provincial leadership team who will review the application. During this time the “aspirant” lives in a Marianist community and takes on a part-time responsibility in one of the many Marianist apostolates that the community has. The “aspirant” actively participates in the community life while being mentored by a professed member of the community. Next is becoming a “novice,” meaning that one is solely focused on formation and lives amongst members of the Province who are designated to live with and direct the novitiate community. During the first half of the novitiate, one is focused on fostering one’s own spiritual and intellectual life, taking classes on the history of the

²¹⁶ Landolfi, “The Christocentric Christ.”

Society of Mary and the theology of religious life with a focus on the Marianist charism. The second half is dedicated to active ministry within a different community for a period of time, after which one then returns to the novitiate's original community for a time of self-reflection and evaluations before moving on to the next step of religious life. The next step is being "temporarily professed," meaning that one takes the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability which are to be renewed each year of being "temporarily professed." The vow of stability is a unique vow of the Marianists which emphasizes the lifelong dedication one will have to the Blessed Mother. One continues their theological and communal formation while taking on an apostolate for the order whether that be in education, ministry, etc. After some time, one is able to make a formal request to make "perpetual vows," which is the last and final step of Marianist formation. This is a serious step and not one that is taken lightly because one is making a permanent commitment to serve as a son of Mary in bringing Christ to the world. Some brothers are later called to the vocation of the priesthood after being perpetually professed, meaning they receive seminary formation to be ordained for that specific office. However, whether one is a brother or a priest within the Society of Mary, outside of liturgical roles each member is seen as brothers in Christ and sons of Mary.

Marianist Spirituality and Virtues

During the course of his lifetime, Chaminade taught members of sodalities and the Society of Mary different stages of spiritual development. The goal of the spiritual life for the Marianists is to be in perfect conformity with Jesus Christ. Chaminade emphasized this spiritual goal in his directions to the brothers towards the end of his life. Although Chaminade was not able to finish his intended "Manual of Marianist

Direction,” other members of Chaminade’s congregation took it upon themselves to finish outlining their founder’s work.²¹⁷ For Chaminade, spiritual development was centered in growing in virtues of preparation, purification, and consummation.²¹⁸

Virtues of Preparation

Quintin Hakenewerth is a Marianist spiritual writer, historian, and priest who writes extensively on how individuals can grow in faith and virtue following Chaminade’s virtue system. There are four virtues of preparation: silence, recollection, obedience, and support of mortification. Hakenewerth distinguishes the difference between exterior and interior silences as a result of Chaminade’s teaching. Within these categories, he also distinguishes different forms of interior and exterior silence.

Regarding the exterior silences, one should seek to silence both signs and words. The silence of signs means that one should make note of one’s facial expressions, posture, manners and actions to reflect the state of prayer one seeks to achieve. In doing this, one seeks to authentically express their true selves, while maintaining the respect of those around them.²¹⁹ The goal of the silence of signs is to create harmony and a welcoming presence among all those embarking in this spiritual exercise of Marianist spiritual life.

Another exterior silence that Hakenewerth writes about is called the silence of words. Chaminade roots this silence in the person of Mary, whom he believed loved

²¹⁷ Quintin Hakenewerth, “Marianist Origins: An Anthology of Basic Documents for Formation in Marianist Identity,” *NACMS* (Dayton: North American Center for Marianist Studies, 1990), 63.

²¹⁸ Hakenewerth, “Marianist Origins”, 63. “All these virtues of preparation, purification, and consummation are indicated to us by the text of St. Peter: ‘Strive to go by faith to virtue, from virtue to knowledge, from knowledge to abstinence, from abstinence to patience, from patience to piety, from piety to love of the brotherhood, from love of the brotherhood to divine charity. It is by the practice of these virtues that we will come to the perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ and to life eternal. Amen.’ (2 P. 1:5-8).”

²¹⁹ Quintin Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus: The Marianist Method of Virtues for use in Groups* (Dayton: North American Center for Marianist Studies, 2008), 30.

silence because she spoke so little and rarely in scripture. Mary never spoke unless it was absolutely necessary, something which Chaminade refers to as “mindfulness of speech.”²²⁰ When one is mindful of silence, one begins to take note of what comes from one’s ego. In recognizing and controlling one’s own ego, one is able to recognize Jesus leading one to understand one’s true self.²²¹ This virtue of silencing words empowers one to seek one’s inner truth that initially is presented as fears. These fears are feelings such as, but not limited to, self-doubt and an inability to understand what God is and where one is being led in prayer. The silence of words enables this self-discovery, allowing for the inner self to become strong and confident because “the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32).

The interior silences are those of the mind, imagination, and passions. In regard to the mind, Chaminade acknowledges how busy a person can get. He encourages one to make appropriate time for reflection because it is through reflection that one achieves peace in Christ.²²² Being attentive to one’s thoughts is necessary for the silence of minds, because discernment of what is true or false must be done properly. The mind is a delicate thing and often times the mind can get confused when it is trying to piece unrelated elements together. Chaminade saw that in silencing the mind one can recognize and discern between ideas and values; between what is true and false.²²³ Only in silence can this outcome be revealed. Hakenewerth states: “this virtue puts out of our minds what

²²⁰ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 21.

²²¹ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 21.

²²² Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 34.

²²³ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 37.

serves only the demands of our ego or sensuality, and it nourishes our true self with truth.”²²⁴

A challenging interior silence to perform is the silence of imagination. One’s imagination can be a source of inspiration during periods of spiritual dryness, and it is encouraged for one to see that in prayer one has the ability to identify with Mary.

Hakenewerth writes how one can look at moments in Mary’s life, like the suffering she endured watching her son Jesus Christ die on the cross.²²⁵ Jesus had to teach his followers about how to silence their own imaginations in order to enter into a deeper communion with him. Hakenewerth highlights this passage from Luke: “While [the disciples] were still speaking about this, [Jesus] stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?’” (Lk 24: 36-38). What the disciples saw in their imagination was what they thought they saw in front of them leading to the imagination having an effect on their perception. If imagination is allowed to roam freely, it can usually lead one in a direction of immobilizing fear, leading one to disrupt the inner peace that is sought through the practice of prayer. When one practices silencing one’s imagination, it illuminates different true purposes in life.²²⁶

The final interior silence is silence of passions. Joseph Lackner was a Marianist scholar, missionary, and priest who saw the silence of passions as the first virtue one feels in the spiritual life. Lackner writes: “One of the first steps in practicing this virtue

²²⁴ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 37.

²²⁵ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 51-2.

²²⁶ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 55.

[silence of passions] is recognizing that we feel, naming the feelings and consciously feeling them.”²²⁷ In practicing this silence, there are several steps that Chaminade recommends one take. The first step is to become aware of one’s feelings. Being aware of one’s own emotions enables one to recognize and acknowledge the temptations one carries into silencing one’s passions. The second step is to properly name one’s emotions, which enables one to acknowledge certain behaviors and feelings that are a result of passion. When one denies feelings, the result is usually detrimental to moving forward in the spiritual life.²²⁸ It is important to remember that emotions have power and can be either constructive or destructive within the spiritual life. The third step is to become aware of where one’s emotions and feelings are directing one. These emotions and feelings are valid according to both Chaminade and Hakenewerth because they help one recognize goals in the spiritual life.²²⁹ The fourth step is making sure one is able to describe the passion that one feels. In doing this one is able to recognize patterns of feelings towards situations, people, etc. A passion in this context is an emotional energy that is either attached or associated with a certain object or goal, according to Hakenewerth.²³⁰ It is important to keep the passions one has in order by knowing what they are, because passions can often lead one to express a desire for righteous praise which is unhealthy. The fifth and final step for performing the silence of passions is to understand the ego that comes from passions. If practiced properly, the silence of passions should develop passions that are directed towards the truth and what is good

²²⁷ Joseph Lackner, *Virtues for Mission* (Dayton: North American Center for Marianist Studies, 2003).

²²⁸ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 44.

²²⁹ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 44.

²³⁰ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 44.

instead of serving as an extension of one's ego.²³¹ Passions should be directed towards the love of God and others, which in itself is a noble virtue.

The second virtue of preparation according to Chaminade is recollection. This virtue enables one to live in the present moment bringing one's life fully together. The world is full of distractions and disruptions, which is why Chaminade saw it as essential to recollect oneself in a state of prayer. Hakenewerth writes about how people whose attention and energy are often divided and scattered are usually unhappy people who end up accomplishing very little.²³² In order for one to fully pay attention, one needs to practice all of the silences as listed above. Recollection and silence enable one to keep the ego from directing oneself. Recollection in prayer, according to Chaminade, is a time to put aside all of the news, achievements, good things, stories, and obstacles one recalls so as to focus intensely on prayer.²³³

The third virtue of preparation is obedience. Hakenewerth writes that obedience can be described as doing the will of another.²³⁴ A Marianist brother, priest, and sister all make a vow to be obedient to the superiors of the order. Obedience goes against the will of the ego. When one talks about "obeying," it is a recognition of the needs and purposes of another in the hopes of fulfilling the will of another.²³⁵ When one is being obedient, one is placing the intent of others above one's own intention, which is neither naïve nor foolish because it enables one to give a genuine "yes." This genuine "yes" engages the whole being of another.²³⁶ Chaminade was inspired by the obedience of the Blessed

²³¹ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 45.

²³² Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 63.

²³³ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 64.

²³⁴ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 72.

²³⁵ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 72-3.

²³⁶ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 73.

Mother who was able to give a genuine “yes” to the angel who announced that she was to conceive a son in her womb and to name him Jesus (Lk 1:32-38).

The fourth and final virtue of preparation is called support of mortifications. Throughout the course of one’s life, there are moments of suffering which may be interior suffering or exterior suffering or both. Chaminade sees the support of mortification as a way for one to develop a spiritual toughness. This spiritual toughness is necessary for one to master what is essential and worthwhile in life.²³⁷ Chaminade distinguishes two degrees of this virtue of support of mortification. The first one is an endurance of pain and affliction without either complaining or giving up in anger.²³⁸ Unfortunately, this often leads one to be sad and unhappy, but for Chaminade this step is important because one builds up the willpower and understanding of mortification. However, Chaminade does not stop there because the second degree of support of mortification is a way of accepting this suffering as a way for one to become stronger in doing good and finding deeper meaning in life.²³⁹ In accepting this suffering, Chaminade believes that it keeps one focused on the inner peace that exists within oneself. In accepting suffering, one is able to endure suffering and move forward in life because it offers one a period of self-reflection. The example of Jesus making the best of his suffering for the sake of good is a comparable image for Chaminade because it unites the one practicing these virtues with Christ. One’s strength is rooted in Jesus Christ leading to a dynamic reality of “filling up what is lacking in afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church” (Col 1:24).²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 82.

²³⁸ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 84.

²³⁹ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 84.

²⁴⁰ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 86.

In practicing the virtues of preparation, silence, recollection, obedience, and support of mortification, Chaminade believes one will be able to walk on a path towards perfection. Each virtue can be viewed as a different type of examen, or spiritual work done by an individual.²⁴¹ These virtues are a method for beginning to have a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, while also beginning to discover different inner principles about oneself.²⁴²

Virtues of Purification

Purification occurs as a result of preparation. However, as discussed previously, preparation occurs when one wishes to remove or control an obstacle encountered in the spiritual life. Meanwhile, during purification, one is to elevate to a higher spiritual status in life and achievement.²⁴³ Purification accepts the obstacles in life and makes them work for one's best interest and for the good of oneself.

Chaminade breaks down this virtue in two different ways. The first is that the virtue of purification seeks to purify the soul's interior obstacles. Chaminade saw that weakness can be purified through both strength and faith.²⁴⁴ He also believed that the interior obstacles the soul can purify are evil tendencies. The example used for this belief are examples such as when the soul is purified of laziness through courage and of sensuality by temperance.²⁴⁵ The soul can also be purified of internal uncertainty through opening one's soul to direction in hopes of avoiding being led astray in the spiritual life.

²⁴¹ Hakenewerth, "Marianist Origins," 64.

²⁴² Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 18.

²⁴³ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 90.

²⁴⁴ Hakenewerth, "Marianist Origins," 64. Chaminade was inspired when Paul writes the following: "When I am weak, I become strong by grace" (2 Cor. 12:10).

²⁴⁵ Hakenewerth, "Marianist Origins," 64.

The second way Chaminade breaks down this virtue is seeking purification in exterior obstacles. Chaminade does this in three points. The first point is through overcoming prolonged suffering by means of wisdom, prudence, or the example of the communion of saints.²⁴⁶ The second point is that of the pursuit of truth through mental prayer and going on retreat. Spending time in contemplation is a necessary form of purification because it gives one the opportunity to think and pray about the world and the truth contained within it.²⁴⁷ The third point that Chaminade makes is to be aware of temptations that surround oneself. Both the soul and mind need to be purified so as to be made aware of these attempts made for one's salvation.²⁴⁸

Virtues of Consummation

Everything achieved in both the virtues of preparation and the virtues of purification build up to the virtues of consummation. The virtues of consummation enable one to let go of one's old habits that kept one from communion with Jesus Christ and to enter into an atmosphere of peace. These virtues enable one to act habitually with faith, hope, and love in Jesus Christ making it the ultimate goal of all the virtues.²⁴⁹

Chaminade uses the image of Christ on the cross to talk about the virtues of consummation because it was his belief that Jesus summed up his whole life by stating: "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). The "it" used in John's gospel, Chaminade says, is referring to the mission of Christ which is similar to the mission of Christian life.²⁵⁰ Chaminade continues by discussing how Jesus's work consisted not only of his ministry of preaching,

²⁴⁶ Hakenewerth, "Marianist Origins," 64.

²⁴⁷ Hakenewerth, "Marianist Origins," 64.

²⁴⁸ Hakenewerth, "Marianist Origins," 64.

²⁴⁹ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 137.

²⁵⁰ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 137-8.

healing, and forgiving but also the consummation of all these virtues at the time of his death, setting the example for all who follow him.²⁵¹

Chaminade breaks the virtues of consummation down into four different parts: humility, interior modesty, abnegation of self, and renunciation.²⁵² On humility, Chaminade writes that when one gets closer to God, one begins to understand that everything comes from God and not much extends from oneself.²⁵³ Humility begins to silence one's ego and begins to attribute and give right praise to God.

For Chaminade, interior modesty is broken down into four different qualities. The first is that interior modesty moves quickly, attempting to preserve the purity of an individual prior to the ego subduing oneself.²⁵⁴ The second is that interior modesty becomes sensitive to perceiving meaning in such a way that one's subconscious is conditioned to receive and accept praise but not to hold onto and boast in it.²⁵⁵ The third is that interior modesty is prompt to defend one's dignity and virtue. Chaminade believed that some praise can consume the ego and as a result one needs to shield their virtue from the desires of the ego and be recentered in Christ.²⁵⁶ The fourth is that interior modesty is the excellence of God's gift and both preserves and protects Jesus above all else. This enables one to actualize the gifts that God has given one to both think and act vigilantly.²⁵⁷ For Chaminade, interior modesty is an extension of the example of the

²⁵¹ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 138.

²⁵² Hakenewerth, "Marianist Origins," 64-5.

²⁵³ Hakenewerth, "Marianist Origins," 64. "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt. 11:29).

²⁵⁴ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 151. "Our first reaction to any ego-centered move is to protect God's gifts from distortion of our ego. I once told a choir director what a beautiful voice she had. Her spontaneous and candid response was, "Thank you. God is good." It was a quick, spontaneous response, sensitive to her gift and to God's goodness in the gift."

²⁵⁵ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 151.

²⁵⁶ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 151.

²⁵⁷ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 151.

Blessed Mother who uses her canticle in Luke to reference her modesty (Lk. 1:46-55). Her Magnificat pronounced her modesty to the world in freely accepting to bear Christ in her womb. Her soul rejoiced and pronounced the greatness of God making her both an example of humility and modesty for Chaminade.²⁵⁸

The third virtue of consummation is the abnegation of self. The word abnegation comes from the Latin word *abnegare*, meaning “to deny and separate from.”²⁵⁹ This means that the old self that existed prior to recognizing the virtues of consummation is slowly withering away and one is becoming closer to Christ in the process. It is necessary for one to deny or separate the new self from the old self and allow Christ to become the center of one’s mind and judgement. One’s natural inclinations and attractions are reoriented towards God, which opens the door to a spiritual consolation and stillness found within a relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit.²⁶⁰

The fourth and final virtue of consummation is renunciation of creatures and the world. The whole process of the virtues for Chaminade has been building up to this point of renouncing things that are not necessary for a relationship with Christ. Marianist spirituality is all about the relationship one has with Christ and to train oneself to control one’s ego. The ego can be the biggest obstacle in the spiritual life and Chaminade knew that. In renouncing all vanities and intimacies that keep one from an authentic relationship with Christ, one comes to understand the knowledge of Christ in a deeper, more intimate way.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 152.

²⁵⁹ Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 157.

²⁶⁰ Hakenewerth, “Marianist Origins,” 65.

²⁶¹ Hakenewerth, “Marianist Origins,” 65.

Understanding Marianist spirituality played a key role in conducting my ethnographic study. Throughout the course of my ethnographic study of a Marianist community, these virtues came up in conversation and in observation of the community. Every member of the community is formed in these virtues and acknowledges them in their prayer and works.

Entry into the Research Site

On a cold weekend in February, I had the great opportunity to spend time with a community of Marianist priests and brothers living in the Dayton area. The community's mission consists of a number of dimensions, one of which is both serving and ministering to university students. All the Marianists come from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, but each share the same charism for their work as faithful sons of Mary.²⁶² Upon entering their community, I had to arrange everything required for this study through the community director. On behalf of the community, he had expressed to me the community's excitement about my study primarily because they all agreed that it was very important work. The community discerns the Holy Spirit in a number of ways and each brother brings his own unique perspective to the mixture.

The community resides in a normal two-story house that meets the needs of each community member. Each member has his own room and shares communal spaces such as the living room, dining room, laundry room, and kitchen. The house also contains a chapel on the first floor that will be discussed in more detail later on. The communal rooms, such as the kitchen and dining room, are the social hubs of the house where

²⁶² This research was conducted throughout the scope of three days. The community was very gracious to have me stay as long as I did. The community, as mentioned, was ethnically diverse and ranged in age from 23 to late-70's. I got the chance to interview each member of this community asking them the same questions for the sake of consistency. In total, I interviewed 9 vowed religious of the Society of Mary.

members gather to cook and eat with one another. The dining room contains a long rectangular table with chairs on both sides. The community makes the effort to make their residence feel, look, and operate as a normal suburban home. Just as one would imagine in a big home, everything has a place. For example, the community has two fridges due to the number of people that live in this community. Each fridge has a purpose and only certain things go in each fridge. Items such as juice, milk, and creamers are in one fridge. Meanwhile, items such as meats and veggies are in the other fridge. When asked about how they decided what goes where, one brother joyously responded, “it is a constant discernment process when it comes to the order of any kitchen, especially when it comes to consistency.” The structure and layout of the Marianist residence accomplishes its goal of making those who stay and live there feel as if it is an average home.

When I arrived, I was greeted not as a stranger but as a fellow community member, which enabled me to settle in and become acquainted with each member fairly easily. I have spent a number of years being a part of institutions run by the Marianists, so it did not come as a surprise to me to witness their impeccable hospitality. Even during a pandemic, the Marianists welcomed me into their community to observe their practice of the charism of discernment and interview them. Once I was taken to the room where I would be staying during my stay, I noticed that the door had my name labeled on the door with a “welcome” greeting. One brother was gracious enough to show me around the house and run through the evening’s schedule with me. After settling a few last-minute logistical concerns with the director of the community, I was able to begin my

observation methodology. Evening prayer would be the first communal gathering during my stay.

Upon entering the chapel located in a section of the brother's home, I could see that it was a square room containing chairs covering three sides of the walls. These chairs are where members of the community would sit when the community gathered to pray in the chapel. In the front of the room near the door was the altar, where members of the community would gather to celebrate the Eucharist daily. The wall closest to the altar was painted a darkish gold containing a large crucifix of an African Christ about a foot off from the center of the altar. Besides the altar stood two candles and a third candle hung next to the tabernacle behind the altar. The altar has a purple-colored cloth identifying the liturgical season of Lent that the Church was in during my stay. Between the altar are two white candles that were to be lit during the celebration of the Eucharist. Across the room from the altar stood a podium facing the front of the altar giving the impression of a call and response from both the Word and the Eucharist. On the back wall was a tapestry of Jesus on the Cross; on one side stood Mary and on the other stood the faithful apostle, John. Just like the crucifix in the front of the chapel, the figures in this tapestry appeared to be African. The border of the tapestry just like the altar cloth was also purple for the Lenten season.

Moving onto another wall in the chapel, I could not help but notice an icon of the founder of the Society of Mary, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade. The placement of Chaminade in this chapel has some significance. The icon was placed on the wall across from the door meaning that every person that walked into the chapel was greeted by Chaminade. One of the missions of Chaminade was to create a community of men who

seek to form and address issues facing the community and the communities they serve. The feeling in the chapel was that when the community gathered together to pray, they were accompanied by the charismatic spirit of their founder, Fr. Chaminade, while also being present with Christ located in the tabernacle. This feeling of history and sacredness plays a pivotal role in the community's work.

Observation of the Marianist Way of Life

As mentioned previously, the first community gathering I partook in during my stay with the brothers was evening prayer. Evening prayer usually consists of praying a series of three different psalms, consisting of antiphons before each psalm, a reading from scripture, and the praying for the intentions of an individual, the community and the Church. I quickly learned that most Marianist communities in the United States do evening prayer on Fridays a bit differently. A few years ago, at a general province gathering where members of the Province of the United States gather to review and plan the direction of their congregation in the United States, there was a discussion about whether communities should spend more time praying and reflecting using scripture. The province then recommended that every community would practice *Lectio Divina* in place of the traditional divine office.²⁶³ Praying *Lectio Divina* with the members of this

²⁶³ See Christian Raab, "A Guide to *Lectio Divina*," *Notes from a Monastery: The Sacred Way Every Day* (St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 2009). The practice of *Lectio Divina* is an important spiritual tool because it encourages one participating in this form of prayer affirms the need for thoughts and emotions in prayer. *Lectio Divina* consists of four steps/stages: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer), and *contemplatio* (contemplation). *Lectio* consists of reading the passage twice which is compared to meeting someone for the first time. One has an initial reaction to meeting someone then through conversation one begins to notice traits that were not noticed at first glance. One should pause at the end of each reading of the passage and repeat any word or phrase that stood out. *Meditatio* is reading through the passage a third time and pausing at the end to reflect upon what God could be trying to say to the reader. One should ask oneself questions such as: "Is the Word speaking to you about your relationship with God, or with others, or with yourself? Is God consoling you? Challenging you? Inspiring you?". *Oratio* is reading the passage for the fourth time and at the end taking several minutes to pray to God giving God right praise and asking for God's intercession and aid. The final step/stage of *contemplatio* is when one reads through the passage for a fifth and final time to then sit silently in the presence of God and contemplate God's presence in one's

community gave me an insight about the dynamic of the community prior to conducting my one-on-one interviews. Each member called upon a different form of the Holy Spirit, whether that be the Spirit of justice, courage, or wisdom to intercede for the world, the Church, the community, and even themselves. At the conclusion of evening prayer, the community consecrated themselves and their continued work to the Blessed Mother by praying the Marianist doxology: “May the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit be glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary.”

From the chapel the community moved into one of their living rooms on the first floor, where one of the community members had a platter of assorted cheeses and crackers on display. Everyone was encouraged to get a drink from a small table in the back corner of the living room containing soda, juice, and wine. Members of the community mingled with one another as one member continued last minute preparations for dinner. After getting their drinks, everyone made their way to the couches and talked about their days. The feeling was comparable to Thanksgiving when your extended family gets together and talks about the work that they are currently doing. The brothers seemed to recall prior conversations about other brothers’ work and the tasks they had to get done that week. I could sense that every member of this community took an interest in each other’s life. As we were going into a weekend, a number of the priests who lived in the community were asked about their Sunday schedules and how homily preparation was going. Others who served at the University of Dayton in leadership roles were asking one another about certain meetings attended the previous week. I could not help but smile at the fraternal care this community showed towards one another. This community ranged

life. Usually, the practice is ended with praying the Our Father or some other concluding prayer offering praise to God for being with one during that experience.

in ages, interests, and cultures, yet they saw each other as authentic brothers in mission, charism, and Christ.

Being that it was a Friday in Lent, each member seemed to be cautious of how many hors d'oeuvres he was consuming before dinner began. As conversations began to dwindle, one member of the community came in to announce dinner. Everyone then proceeded to stand up, gather their beverages, and head into the dining room. As mentioned previously, the dining room consisted of a long rectangular table that extended across the whole room. Everyone took their respective seat on either side of the table with food ready to be consumed in the middle. Unfortunately, because everyone sat around one table, conversations were limited to those who were closest to me. I sat towards the end of the table near the window with about five brothers in ears' distance of myself. The conversation revolved mostly around my thesis, the different stages of my writing process, and when I expected to finish my project. Most of the brothers I knew from previous experiences at the University and connections within the Society of Mary; however, there were some sitting near me I did not know well.

For the purposes of this study, I was not to be the center of attention but was merely supposed to observe and take notes. This was a challenge for two reasons. One was that the Society of Mary, like the Benedictines, has a charism for hospitality and seeks to engage and form young people. The second challenge was that I am an extrovert who enjoys having conversations with others and learning their stories. The conversations that both members of the community and I were eager to have during dinner would come much later in my stay with the brothers. As dinner was concluding, I began to notice that those who finished their meals remained at their seats and continued having

conversations with one another until all were finished. Authentic communion with one another would be the way that I would describe this period of the evening because every person sat there for the same purpose: being in community and communion with one another. Eventually, one brother clinks a fork on the side of his glass getting both silence and attention from everyone present. Behind me was a small brown table that had a book propped on top of it open to a specific page. I took notice of it when I initially sat down but paid no attention to it until one brother reached behind me to retrieve the book. Someone then leaned over and whispered to me that “they read a passage from the *Rule of Life* at the conclusion of each supper.” The brother that reached behind me read a specific passage of the Society of Mary’s *Rule of Life*, which dealt with a specific role that the office of temporalities held. The purpose of reading the *Rule of Life* was relayed to me at the conclusion of the reading as a way to review the principles of the society, the community, and the commitment that each makes as professed religious. At the conclusion of the reading, the community again recited the Marianist doxology and proceeded to get up from their chairs to gather all dishes and leftover food and bring everything into the kitchen.

Within moments of moving into the kitchen to clean after dinner, everyone jumped into action and began to either load the dishwasher or put away left-over food from dinner. I quickly realized that the community had this task down to a science with everyone pitching in to get the kitchen cleaned and back in order. The community was a living example of the saying “many hands make light work.” Once everything was put away, everyone was free to do whatever they would have liked for the rest of the evening. However, most of the members of this community are fans of the Dayton Flyers

basketball team, which happened to be playing that night. In the basement of their home was another living room and an entertainment room, where the community gathered to watch movies and the Dayton basketball games. The game was the Dayton Flyers versus the Saint Louis Billikens. Everyone watching the game had a passion for the game and even knew most of the players' names accompanied by their career stats. While watching the game, I began to notice a different side of the community that was a little more competitive than I thought. They are dedicated fans and love to show their school support, especially being that Dayton won the game 76 to 53. After the winning game, some brothers remained in the kitchen area, but most retired for the night. In my conversations with those who remained up, I learned about some of the projects they were currently working on. Others talked about their weekend responsibilities for a Marianist community on Governor's Island in Ohio.²⁶⁴ Eventually, everyone would retire for the night and would reconvene the next morning for morning prayer and to celebrate at the table of the Eucharist. I, on the other hand, retired to my room in preparation for the next day's continued ethnographic study and participant interviews.

The next morning, the community gathered at around 7:30 am to pray morning prayer. Prayer began with a period of silence so as to collect and silence their minds, words, signs, passions, and imaginations. This was time set aside at the beginning of prayer with the intention of cultivating a prayerful atmosphere of Marianist virtue. The community then called upon the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother to accompany them

²⁶⁴ I learned that the Province's property on Governor's Island was a gift to the Society of Mary in hopes that it would be used as a place for members to retreat. Currently, there is a community of Marianist brothers who live on Governor's Island and because that community lacks a priest in residence, they usually request the services of an available priest from several Marianist communities in the Dayton area. It just so happened the individual I was conversing with that night after the basketball game was due to celebrate mass for the Governor's Island community later that weekend.

as they began their day in prayer. Morning prayer was prayed according to the week in the psalter and the feast day accompanying the day. At the end of prayers, the community collected themselves in silence and prepared to celebrate the Eucharist. During the transition from the liturgy of the Word to the liturgy of the Eucharist, the community created a circular formation extending outward from the altar making sure that all participate in and are included in the Eucharistic celebration. At the end of mass, the community reconsecrated the day and their work to the Blessed Mother and her patronage. The community then dispersed for the day. Some attended breakfast following mass and others went off to prepare to head out for what they had previously scheduled for the day. I had the opportunity to sit and eat breakfast with a few members of the community to discuss how I would be conducting my interviews throughout the course of the day. About 40 minutes after breakfast, I was led to the room where I would be conducting my interviews.²⁶⁵

Interviews with Members of the Marianist Community in Dayton

Through conducting my study, I got to know every member of this community and how each one of them viewed the Holy Spirit working in their lives. Each member, as was expected, explained and expressed their own personal relationship with the Holy Spirit and how the Spirit directed and guided them as Marianists and members of this specific community. Every participant was asked the same questions in order to highlight certain repeating themes in their answers. In doing this, I was able to record accounts of how the individual discerned the Holy Spirit, while also getting a sense of how the community discerned the Holy Spirit. As a disclaimer, my conversations with

²⁶⁵ The room where I conducted my interviews met all the COVID requirements for conducting in-person interviews established by the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at the University of Dayton.

participants are discussed with the intent to protect anonymity. Below, I identify each participant with a number in place of their name. This section seeks to highlight the common themes that I noticed as a result of my conversations with each member of the community.²⁶⁶ The common themes I seek to highlight are as follows: conviction in purpose, availability, love of Mary and brother, and Spirit-driven mission.

Conviction in Purpose

Everyone brought an interesting perspective on what it means to be a Marianist. However, a unifying theme in each conversation was that their work served a greater purpose. Marianist #1 used a quote from Chaminade that serves two purposes: a description of his role as a Marianist and the role of the community. Marianist #1 states, “for Fr. Chaminade the best gift that the society could give is direction to an individual.” This quotation of Chaminade began to articulate a theme of a convicted purpose of bringing communities and individuals into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. A way the Marianists do this is through living out the community’s values and charism outside their homes. What I mean by this is easy to understand, because for the Society of Mary their community and charism extends beyond a geographical location. The Marianists are to follow in the footsteps of their founder, William Joseph Chaminade, and invite others

²⁶⁶ The questions that were asked ranged from asking the individual to discuss a bit about themselves starting with who they are and what led them to become a Marianist. I continued by asking specific questions about the role this individual plays within their community and then what role they have outside the community. Most, if not all, members of this particular community had direct connection with the University serving as an administrator, an advisor, as a minister, as a teacher, or even as a student. The community’s ages and cultural backgrounds also ranged making each individual response unique. I continued by asking each interviewee what the Holy Spirit means to them and what they understand discernment to mean. I then asked questions about prayer paradigms and how they remain open to the will of the Holy Spirit. I asked questions regarding what they understand a series of words to mean such as: consolation, desolation, authenticity, unity, and contemplation. Moving on, I asked questions regarding the mission of the community they live in and how the Spirit is present in their community. I concluded by asking questions regarding how their community discerns the Holy Spirit asking if they could recount a time when they discerned as a community.

in prayerful communion to be a part of their charism and mission. The society's mission is to continue the mission of the Blessed Mother in bringing Christ to others empowered by the Holy Spirit. This community, however, lives out the society's mission while maintaining their own mission to live in such a way that the presence of God is always felt.

Each member shared with me his own vocation story. In hearing all of these personal spiritual journeys of discernment, I noticed that there was a dichotomy emerging. On one hand, I heard a number of vocations that were approached with opposition, whether that of parents not wanting their son to become a vowed religious or a Marianist's own opposition to giving up so much in service of the society's mission. Then, on the other hand, for some members of the community, the decision to become Marianist was easy and a calling they enthusiastically accepted. However, almost every single member acknowledged that times have changed, and the Marianist formation process has changed quite a bit since they entered the society.²⁶⁷

In maintaining a conviction of purpose, there is required a certain level of accountability, which is why one member of the community plays the role of leading the community as Community Director.²⁶⁸ Being that the Community Director is to hold adult men accountable to their vocation and the mission of both their community and the Marianist society, the director serves a fundamental role. The Community Director is a three-year position elected internally by the community, who choose the member whom they believe could lead the local community and offer fraternal correction when

²⁶⁷ One community member, who will be discussed later as Marianist #3, discussed how he began the steps towards becoming a Marianist when he was in high school. Marianist #3 was part of a formation program for high schoolers who had a Marianist vocation.

²⁶⁸ The Community Director is equivalent to being the local of the congregation.

necessary. Although one in the role of Community Director has communal authority, each director or former director I spoke with expressed that they rarely make decisions on behalf of the community. “For a community’s sustainability,” said Marianist #2, “there needs to be a consistent dialogue with one another. When I served as director, many moons ago, I never made a decision on my own but brought concerns to the community as a whole. This is the beauty of our community. Everyone is both seen and heard.”

A number of members within this community have served as Community Directors of either this community or elsewhere and each expressed that they relied heavily on the Holy Spirit to guide their work. In particular, the Holy Spirit aided the Community Director in having conversations and caring for the members of the community. It was relayed to me that sometimes conversations need to be had with other members of the community concerning their contribution to the mission of their respective community so much so that Marianist #3 commented: “sometimes the Holy Spirit led me to have a decision that left me very unliked by some.” Discernment does not always lead to agreeable outcomes within a community, which is why Marianist #3 expressed that he was following the will of the Holy Spirit in making those tough necessary decisions. One of the tough decisions that Marianist #3 had to make occurred when he was elected to a leadership role. During his tenure, Marianist #3 had to make difficult decisions. He recalled that the decisions were not easy, and he prayed for the Holy Spirit to guide him in relaying this information to those members of his community who would be hurt by this decision. “I discerned a lot about what to say,” said Marianist #3, “but at the end of the day I knew that I was relaying these notices ...for the good of the order.” Marianist #3, among others who served in previous leadership roles for either

their community or province, relayed to me that in following Chaminade's system of virtues, in particular the virtue of silence, the Spirit made it clear to them what should be done in tough times. Accompanying this discernment with the Spirit were active conversations with members of their order and community. Those who make these executive decisions within the Society of Mary do not do so without thorough conversation and prayer with members of their community. The purpose of this very thorough process of discernment and conversation is to make sure that no stone goes unturned before making major decisions that affect the well-being of their fellow brothers in Christ.

When asked the question of how, as Community Director, one was able to discern where the Holy Spirit was leading the community, I received several varying answers. One answer that stood out was that the mission of the community to be an example of the Marianist charism is always at the forefront of the discernment process. Another mentioned that they discerned the Spirit through the intercession of the Blessed Mother and Chaminade who all their lives followed the direction of the Spirit. Overall, the consensus I received about how the Community Director discerned was through active conversation with the community and the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit," states Marianist #1, "always wants us as a community to engage and converse with one another. It prompts us to engage in dialogue with one another, especially as leaders in the community. I can only best serve my brothers, the Blessed Mother, and God if I have a sense of what the community needs and where the Holy Spirit is calling us to go." All of this aids in the community's purpose to serve in inviting others to encounter God through their way of life and virtue-centered charism.

Availability

Another theme that came up in my conversations was availability. Several members of the community expressed that the work they do for the community extends beyond the perimeters of the university and the city of Dayton. This commitment to the Church instills upon each community member a willingness to make themselves available in a number of ways. For example, several priests in the community have several clerical responsibilities and requests that take them away from their main apostolate at the university but connect them with people outside of their immediate ministerial scope. The brothers as well are in high demand especially as consultants and leaders for movements in the Church concerning issues such as social justice and pastoral counseling. A Marianist is supposed to be someone who is available and open to the reception of the community and the Church they serve. As mentioned previously, Chaminade believed that the most important thing the society could give to the world was direction.

Availability also translates into the way the community discerns. It was expressed to me by Marianist #4 that just as a Marianist is available to the community they serve, they are also available to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. In discussing both the Marianist spirituality and apostolate, it was made clear that some in this community discern through the many gifts of the Holy Spirit. For example, Marianist #1, when asked about how he remains open and available to the Holy Spirit, stated: “I have noticed that throughout my years of being a Marianist and when I have been in different places in my life and vocation, I call upon a different gift of the Holy Spirit. Currently, I often pray to the Spirit of wisdom and courage but that has not always been the case. I try to the best of my

ability to always be available to the messages of the Spirit, whether they be found in my work or in my prayer.”

Being available to the Holy Spirit for some Marianists is a part of their contemplative prayer. Marianist #5 has spent years of his ministry and service to the community focused on teaching and leading people in contemplative exercises. He discussed with me at length the way he encourages his participants and mentees to remain readily available because “the Spirit’s message can sometimes hit you like a ton of bricks. Usually, you get knocked down and are disoriented but when you come to you know the path you were meant to walk on.” Leading these contemplation workshops made Marianist #5 a better minister because he saw his passion and interest in contemplation being appreciated and practiced at a much larger scale. Throughout his years of being a professed religious, Marianist #5 has had the opportunity to renew and refine his contemplative craft because he followed the direction of the Spirit. He explained to me that his initial interest in contemplation came as a result of discernment. The story is that Marianist #5 experienced an emotional event that left him feeling desolate, which he affirmed as a form of discernment. The desolate feeling in his life got worse the longer he did not address and confront the issues he was facing in his ministry. Marianist #5 then turned to the silences of Chaminade that were discussed previously in this chapter. Marianist #5 explained that for him and his discernment, the silences led him to appreciate contemplation, which he teaches can be one of the graces of practicing the different tiers of Chaminade’s silences. Marianist #5 concluded by stating that silence, availability, and contemplation are key elements of his ministry and pedagogy that have led him to be a confident minister and Spiritual Director.

Love of Mary and Brother

The Marianist vow of stability, as discussed previously, is a vow unique to the Society of Mary that embraces Mary's mission in proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ. Marianist #3 talked extensively with me about the vow of stability. Marianist #3 shared with me an article by Albert Prendergast, who was a member of a Marianist Lay Community since the late 60's. The article given to me discusses at length the history behind the vow of stability and what it looks like within a community today. Of course, Marianist #3 pointed out to me through the course of our conversation that much of the article's application to the society has developed throughout the years.

During the formation of the first Marianist community, Chaminade wanted to add a special vow that would dedicate his followers to the mission of the Marian Sodality. This vow, that would be later known as stability, was called the vow of zeal for the salvation of souls.²⁶⁹ The vow of zeal for the salvation of souls served three different purposes for Chaminade. One was that the vow in accompaniment with the other canonical vows would create a path for attaining zeal. The second purpose was that it would preserve, increase, and perfect the Sodality model that Chaminade developed to better Christian communities in France. The third purpose was to give superiors the power of commissioning offices. Much like the vow of obedience, the vow of zeal for the salvation of souls made it so that if one was refusing an office, employment, or commission made by the respective superior the individual could be in a state of sin.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ Albert Prendergast, "Marianist Vow of Stability and the Marianist State," 6.

²⁷⁰ Hebert George Kramer, *Venerable Chaminade's ETAT...a Forerunner of Secular Institutes: A Fresh Translation, an In-Depth Analysis*, (St. Louis: MRC, 1974), 104.

Eventually, this vow would evolve into the vow of stability as a special vow of consecrating one's life and work to the Blessed Mother.²⁷¹

This love and dedication to Mary was emphasized by every single member of this community. In fact, some even pointed out to me that as Marianists some often pray to both the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother for guidance because of their devotion and the graces they receive through their intercessions. Every conversation affirmed that the work of the individual Marianist is always out love, devotion, and glorification of Mary. It was quite beautiful to see the stark devotion and passion each member has for the Blessed Mother. The love Mary shows each member of this community leads members to show their fellow brother equal love. It is fair to say that each member of this community loves and cares for his fellow community member, brother, neighbor, and co-worker with fervent care. Many described to me that their roles within the community are to serve the other members of the community, whether that be through cleaning, grocery shopping, financing, or cooking meals; each member who lived in this community plays an important role. Even the senior members of the community have service-oriented roles in the community making it a community of equals instead of a hierarchy. All service and prayer are done out love that extends from their role as sons of the Blessed Mother.

Spirit-Driven

Being with this community, I could sense that there was a certain driving force for all of these men. In my conversations with each member of this particular community, I understood that the driving *ethos* of the community was the Holy Spirit. It was expressed to me that it was the love for the Virgin Mary and guidance of the Holy Spirit that led

²⁷¹ Prendergast, "Marianist Vow of Stability and the Marianist State," 7.

many of them to enter into the society. Some expressed to me that it was the will and prospect of the Holy Spirit that led them and their superiors to serve in the current role they play within the community. For example, one member of this community was very hesitant about a move recommended by a superior, because the location he was at previously had been his home for many years. Leaving the work and community behind both frustrated and scared this Marianist, but he relayed to me that eventually when he prayed through that frustration and anger, he saw that he would be great in his new location. He states, “I am not sure why but eventually I found myself saying ‘yah I could be happy [there]’... ‘I can make a difference [there]’... ‘I am being called [there].’ When I opened my heart to the possibility and the graces that could come from the work my superiors asked me to do, I felt more and more comfortable in moving forward with my ‘yes!’” Saying this ‘yes’ to move and take on a different ministry was later compared to Mary’s *fiat* to the angel during the Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38). Each member possesses their own unique relationship with the Holy Spirit. Both the individual relationship and the communal relationship the community has with the Holy Spirit made for a diverse relationship with discerning the Holy Spirit.

In my conversation with Marianist #5, I began to see that for him the Holy Spirit was a person of the Trinity that he did not understand. However, in not understanding the Holy Spirit he believed it made for an interesting discernment because in calling upon the Spirit he never knew what to expect or in what direction the Spirit would lead. Most of Marianist #5’s ministry has been inspired by discerning the Holy Spirit by sitting in silence and trying his best to “contemplate the will of the Spirit.” Marianist #5 continued, “when I work, whether it be in ministry or for the community, I am actively praying. Not

to be rude, but usually my attention is half divided as I am listening to the person in front of me while mentally listening to the Spirit. As an active spiritual director, I believe this is a good characteristic to have. One part of my mind is on the task at hand and the other part is with the Spirit.” The statements made by Marianist #5 were fascinating to say the least because for him discernment is a constant practice in his life. However, his desire to remain in conversation with the Holy Spirit, a theological element he does not understand, is very vulnerable.²⁷²

Marianist #5 was not the only member who expressed distinct views of the Holy Spirit. In my conversation with Marianist #6, I saw a practical pneumatology in action. For Marianist #6 sees the Holy Spirit as something that is beautiful. I note this perspective primarily to show that even amongst those who have received higher levels of theological formation and education, a member of this community can still have a very insightful impression of the Spirit. I was envious in a way of the perspective that Marianist #6 offered to my research because for him discerning the Holy Spirit was as easy as choosing what to wear that day. It appeared to come natural to Marianist #6 that the Holy Spirit was in fact that, the Holy Spirit, and there was not much else to it. However, even with this simple pneumatology, Marianist #6 recounted to me the times he was driven and directed by the Spirit to think or do something. Overall, I was amazed by Marianist #6, and other members were as well, because they mentioned the example he sets for the community in my conversations. The fact that someone could possess such

²⁷² I do believe that most would not outwardly admit that they understand the Holy Spirit. I am commending Marianist #5 for his honesty and candor in our conversation to humbly say that he tries to keep an ear on the Holy Spirit, while maintaining a certain level of confusion and question about the Spirit. Marianist #5 struggled to elaborate when asked about why he remains so attentive to the Spirit. Instead, he responded with, “the Holy Spirit has never let me down or led me on a path I could not handle. My love for my work, my vocation, and the society outweighs my worries and anxieties.”

a simple faith amongst such an intellectually diverse community and feel valued in that community is a beautiful witness.

Conclusion

In review, this chapter introduced the Society of Mary founded by William Joseph Chaminade. This has included a brief history of the congregation's founding and how the Marianists came to establish the University of Dayton. From there, this chapter discussed the charism and spirituality of the Society of Mary's system of virtues influenced by Chaminade. Finally, this chapter summarized an ethnographic study concerning a Marianist community in the Dayton area. In doing this, another paradigm of discerning the Holy Spirit has unfolded. The next chapter seeks to compare and contrast Thomas Dubay's paradigm discussed at length in chapter two and the paradigm of lived theology of discernment influenced by the Marianist charism that has developed in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

AN ASSESSMENT OF DUBAY'S PARADIGM

Both Thomas Dubay's paradigm and the Marianist community provide unique perspectives on how to authentically discern the Holy Spirit. The final chapter of this thesis will synthesize my two primary sources in order to advance toward a method and criteria for discerning the Holy Spirit. In order to do so, I will first highlight aspects of the life of the Marianists that are consistent with Dubay's paradigm. I will then suggest both revisions and enhancements to Dubay's approach to discernment as a result of both my ethnographic study and my own theological reflection.

Affirmations of Dubay's Paradigm

In conducting my ethnographic study of a Marianist community, I observed and discussed discernment methodologies that were very similar to the paradigm that Dubay articulates. The Marianist brothers and priests of this community, just like Dubay, live out a religious charism that often requires discernment. Although Dubay does not make reference to his Marist vocation, one can surmise that his own religious vocation and ministry play a significant role in his writing on discerning the Holy Spirit. Discernment of the Holy Spirit and understanding in whatever way one can the nature of the good and bad spirits is an essential aspect of the Christian life. This can only be done by understanding what discernment is and examining different forms of practice, which is what both Dubay and the Marianists actively engage in. The ultimate goal of discernment within both of these paradigms is to open one's heart and mind to the Holy Spirit in order

to satisfy the intrinsic longing one has for God.²⁷³ In conversation with the Marianists, I quickly learned that everyone who enters into religious life has their own unique story of how they answered their calling to serve God and the Church through living out the mission of their communities.

For Dubay, his mission was to write, educate, and engage with people on theological topics such as scripture and prayer. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Dubay spent a part of his life forming priests, religious brothers and sisters, and the laity in the spiritual life. He did this by means of being a spiritual formator, spiritual director, and notable retreat master. Meanwhile, the Marianists seek to be an example of how to live a Christian life for those to whom they minister. The specific community I studied minister primarily to those in the southern region of Ohio.²⁷⁴ All of this being said, Dubay's paradigm and the Marianist community have several similarities regarding both discernment and the spiritual life including an emphasis on prayer, accountability, and authenticity.

Prayer

Discernment of the Holy Spirit is impossible to do without prayer. One needs to have a good understanding and outlook on what prayer means in order to properly discern. For both Dubay and the Marianists, God is found in the silences, something that Chaminade elaborates on tremendously. Although Dubay does not give a clear method or approach to praying, one can conclude from his paradigm that to experience the beauty of

²⁷³ An example of this longing for God can be found in Psalm 63:1.

²⁷⁴ Members of this community also serve in several different positions within the Province of the United States that takes their ministry outside of southern Ohio. However, it is fair to say that a majority of the community primarily serve both the Dayton community as well as those in southern Ohio. I discussed this at length in chapter four in my section discussing my observation of the Marianist community.

God one must make attempts to contemplate in prayer.²⁷⁵ The Marianists have a good understanding of contemplation as being a fruit of a healthy prayer life that is similar to Dubay's paradigm.²⁷⁶ The Marianist community had a number of community members who use contemplation as their primary method of prayer, spending several hours a day sitting in silence trying to listen for the Spirit to communicate with them. In chapter four, there was a discussion of how the community is driven by the Spirit and it was noted that Marianist #5 often spent time "contemplating the will of the Spirit." Dubay affirms this approach saying that one experiences God as divine through the works of the Holy Spirit.²⁷⁷

Dubay's discernment paradigm is rooted in scripture, which is an important dimension of the method of discernment and prayer for the Marianists. Dubay demonstrates how God usually spoke to the faithful by means of the revealed word relayed by the prophets and later on in the New Testament through Jesus Christ and the apostles who carried on his ministry.²⁷⁸ In understanding the Word better, one is able to understand the will of the Holy Spirit better and therefore, able to be closer to and know God (1 Jn 4:7-8). Dubay encourages one to better understand the wisdom that the apostles and saints had in engaging the scriptures in order to be open to listen to and willing to follow the instruction of the Holy Spirit.

²⁷⁵ See Thomas Dubay, *Authenticity: A Biblical Theology of Discernment* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 60-1.

²⁷⁶ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 61. "Contemplative prayer ... 'is a *gift*, a grace; it can be accepted only in humility and poverty' (CCC 2713). This point is important because there are people who speak too facilely of listening to God when there is no reason to think that they are turned into anything more than some created reality or to their own human perception."

²⁷⁷ See Dubay, *Authenticity*, 61.

²⁷⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 134.

The Marianists spend time each day as a community reflecting on the scripture readings used during the liturgy of the Word during mass. On Friday evenings as a community, they pray *Lectio Divina*. In reflecting and engaging with scripture, the Marianists are allowing God to speak to them through the texts as they are inspired by the Spirit. Marianist #3 told me that “each member of this community brings his own perspective and relationship with the Holy Spirit when he preaches or reflects upon the Word. I am always joyfully taken back by how some approach the text especially being that much of my spirituality is rooted in scripture.” Marianist #3 continued later in our discussion, “I have spent most of my life discerning the Word and the way the Spirit works through me in my vocation. I would not be where I am today if I did not spend as much time as I have with the scriptures. I guess you could say that I feel the Holy Spirit wants me to better understand the Word so I can minister effectively to our congregation and university community.”

The habit and repetition of prayer is emphasized in both Dubay and the Society of Mary making it an essential part of both a criteria and method of discernment in both communities. It is important to note that several of the Marianists expressed to me the different trials they went through to find the method of prayer that works well for them. For example, Marianist #2 said that he found himself often challenged to pray because he felt his approach to prayer was not effective. He began to be disenfranchised by prayer and found himself getting frustrated as a young Marianist trying to pray, and this eventually led him to confront his imposture syndrome.²⁷⁹ During the early stages of the Marianists’ formation process, there is a strong emphasis on the habit of prayer,

²⁷⁹ Imposture syndrome is a feeling of doubting one’s own ability to do something. This enables one to begin to see oneself as a fraud and have discouraging thoughts regarding self-confidence.

especially as one continues to discern a religious vocation with the Society of Mary. In a conversation I had with a novice of the Marianists, he relayed to me that he would not have the relationship he has with Jesus, the Blessed Mother, and the direction the Holy Spirit is calling him towards had he not been trained how to pray properly. By entering into the structured daily schedule of the Marianists (morning prayer, mass, evening prayer, personal prayer, etc.), this novice has developed a habit of prayer, which is essential to his discernment as a Marianist novice. The novice explained that much of their formation in the novitiate is to understand the Marianist charism, while building a spiritual relationship with God. He equated his time in the novitiate as a “long retreat or pilgrimage towards a religious calling.”²⁸⁰ Dubay does not go into much detail on methodologies and approaches to prayer, something which is an issue to be discussed later in this chapter. However, it is important to reemphasize that Dubay holds prayer to be essential to a fruitful and authentic discernment practice.

Accountability

Accountability was a common theme in both Dubay and the Marianists specifically regarding spiritual direction. Formation for the Marianists does not end when one makes final profession or even is ordained a priest. One question I asked those who participated in my ethnographic study was whether they receive spiritual direction. Everyone responded with a resounding “yes.” The reasons why everyone in this community receives ongoing spiritual direction varied but, overall, spiritual direction was an essential element for the fruit of their prayer. Conversations about the spiritual life and

²⁸⁰ This conversation occurred informally with a Novice of the Marianists Province of Meribah located on Long Island, New York. The novice was not part of my ethnographic study but was able to describe his experience of what it is like to be a Marianist novice and build a prayerful relationship with God.

one's own relationship with God and the Holy Spirit seemed to be a common theme in this community, for my questions about one's relationship with the Spirit seemed not to faze anyone. During my conversation with Marianist #4, he discussed how through spiritual direction he is held accountable by his director who checks in on his relationship with God and his vocation as a Marianist. The accountability that the Marianists have is very similar to the accountability Dubay encourages his readers to have.

The role of the spiritual director for Dubay is of great importance especially regarding the way one discerns. According to Dubay, one cannot properly discern the will of the Holy Spirit if one is not being led by someone who is trained and experienced in the spiritual life. For Dubay an acceptable spiritual director is one who is recognized by the Church to serve as an official ecclesial formator of the faithful. Usually, the ideal director is a priest or religious superior, which brings several issues that will be addressed later in the chapter. Spiritual directors are to keep one discerning accountable to themselves and most importantly to the true message of the Holy Spirit.

A spiritual director is there to direct a person on a spiritual journey, not to give orders or to make decisions on someone else's behalf. The director serves as a spiritual sounding board who enables a person seeking direction to recognize and pray that the choices one makes always lead down a path leading one closer to God. The Marianists do this in a number of ways, especially because most in this community also serve as a spiritual director for people in the communities that the Marianists serve.²⁸¹ Members of this community understand what it means to be a spiritual director and one who is receiving spiritual direction. Some in this community have even been formally certified

²⁸¹ In fact, one member of this community has served as my spiritual director for the last two years since being in the graduate program at the University of Dayton.

to be spiritual directors meeting the requirements and expectations that Dubay's paradigm calls for in a spiritual director.

The accountability that exists within the Marianist community also extends beyond a spiritual director in the person of the community director. The community director, as head of the community, is the median in the community to keep his brothers accountable to their charism and mission. Being the median in the community, the Community Director has to remain unbiased and serve as a mediator for the community. In particular, Marianist #1 discussed with me that the Community Director has a tough but virtuous role within the community. It is tough because the director has to keep grown men accountable by sometimes offering a fraternal correction or observation that is critical but stems from love. The accountability of the Community Director is virtuous because so much trust is placed within this community member's ability to discern where the Spirit is leading the community, which is why the Community Director prays for the different gifts of the Holy Spirit to help guide and lead the community. Those in the community who have experience serving as a community director, discussed how to accept that the Holy Spirit uses the Community Director to lead the community to become closer to God. So, in actuality, it is not so much the person of the Community Director that guides the community but instead it is the Holy Spirit that guides the community through the community director, which contributes to the Marianists' virtue, mission, and charism.

Authenticity

Dubay's paradigm is rooted in trying to better understand what authenticity means, and, in particular, what it means to discern authentically. Although I will critique

the way he addresses this question later in this chapter, I must affirm the attempt he makes to clearly articulate authenticity. In the first few pages of his analysis of the word “authenticity,” Dubay discusses how within a modern context the authenticity of things such as love and meaning are often obscured, resulting in a *weakened discernment*.²⁸² Discernment is a practice of attempting to understand the signs the Holy Spirit is trying to make known to one according to the divine mind, according to Dubay. It is not a trend or a fad, as Dubay puts it, but a way of understanding the path the “Author of life” has for one.²⁸³

In its bare essence, the Marianists too see discernment and the path to discern authentically as an attempt to understand the messages of the Holy Spirit. Every morning and evening, the community gathers together to pray for the Spirit to lead them in their work to make them good sons of Mary, brothers of Christ, and children of God. Only the Holy Spirit can lead them on this quest to authentically discern. However, authentic discernment looks different for each member of this community, as has been discussed at length in chapter four of this thesis. Some discern through contemplation and most of them discern by using Chaminade’s system of virtues. Meanwhile, others expressed to me that they do not have a favored method of discernment or even a complicated method of discerning, as in the case of Marianist # 5. Yes, authentic discernment exists within the Marianist community, but an approachable method looks different depending on the

²⁸² See Dubay, *Authenticity*, 23-5. His concern is that way that both love and meaning are obscured by the senses being overloaded by “modern pleasures” that result from being over stimulated by mass media. Dubay originally published this book in 1977 with the second edition published in 1997 by Ignatius Press. I could only imagine what Dubay would say about overstimulation in this current age of smart phones. However, much of what he argued for regarding authentically loving and understanding meaning has been obscured. In the current public arguments regarding “Fake News” it is still a question today of what it means to authentically understand information.

²⁸³ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 25.

person. Not everyone possesses the same relationship with the Spirit, which is not a bad thing, but it challenges the intention of this thesis in trying to distinguish a clear methodology for discerning the Holy Spirit. However, even in the different formulations and practices of discernment the Spirit is still the same. My study of the Marianists led me to conclude that even with differing approaches, each member is convinced that their discernment is authentic, and by elaborating on personal stories each was able to showcase how the Spirit has moved throughout their vocation.²⁸⁴

For example, Marianist #1 discussed with me his vocation story and how the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother had a significant role in him becoming a Marianist. Marianist #1 is a man of many talents and growing up he possessed great talents in a particular field that eventually led him to make life decisions and career prospects based on his ability. However, Marianist #1 recounted that when it came to making a decision of whether or not to pursue this talent in college, his heart was calling him to the Society of Mary. He prayed to the Spirit to give him the strength to discuss his discerning vocation with his parents and to be courageous like the Blessed Mother to say “yes” to this calling. Eventually, he had this conversation with his parents who had other expectations for their son. Of course, Marianist #1’s parents were coming from a place of love and concern for their son and shortly came to accept that the Society of Mary could be where the Lord was calling their son. Marianist #1 recounted how through prayer and listening for the direction of the Holy Spirit, he initially made the decision to pursue his talent in this particular field in college. However, while being away at college, Marianist

²⁸⁴ I have chosen to remain ambiguous in talking about these stories because if I were to tell them in full detail it would ultimately reveal the identity of the individual who discussed them with me. The stories I am referencing are very personal and contain detail that could potentially point directly to the individual who relayed them to me.

#1 still felt the Holy Spirit knocking at his heart and leading him to become a Marianist. “I eventually transferred colleges and entered the Marianist novitiate,” says Marianist #1, “and the rest you could say is history because I answered the calling of the Holy Spirit to be where I am today. Looking back, I have no regret because going to the college I first chose to pursue one of my talents for a bit solidified my discernment.” The way Marianist #1 discerned the calling of the Holy Spirit was “not very complicated,” as he would later go on to say. For him to discern a Marianist vocation came as a result of prayer and actively listening to the Holy Spirit. To this day, Marianist #1 said that he discerns the will of the Holy Spirit in the same way he discerned it all those years ago. However, the difference is that as a result of his years of continued formation he has built a fruitful relationship and dialogue with the Holy Spirit in discerning where God is calling him, his community, and the Society of Mary to respond.

Dubay comments that authentic discernment comes easily and is simple to those who have become saints. Meanwhile authentic discernment comes as a challenge to those who live with sin, which is why Dubay recommends for one to authentically discern to be cleansed from all prior sin.²⁸⁵ In doing this, one is able to clear one’s heart and mind of obstacles that obscure one from authentically discerning the Spirit. Among the Marianists, no one talked specifically about how they overcome the obstacles to authentically discern, but some did discuss how the sacrament of reconciliation plays a part of their discernment process. However, one could assume that for those who receive the sacrament as part of their discernment process it helps them authentically discern the Holy Spirit.

²⁸⁵ See Dubay, *Authenticity*, 25.

Authenticity requires little to no distractions, as it appears that even the slightest tangent can derail someone from authentically discerning, according to Dubay.²⁸⁶ The Marianists admitted that their community can often get distracted by the ministry their community is involved in. This, however, is an aspect of the accountability that the Community Director has for the community because it usually is the responsibility of the Community Director to make sure that responsibilities come second to the healthy prayer life of the members of this community. Prayer plays a tremendous role in authentically discerning the Holy Spirit because as one grows in prayer so too does the strength one has to authentically discern. Both work hand in hand with one another to produce an illuminated path one should take in order to understand and build a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Considering Dubay's paradigm as a whole, a key point in his overarching argument is that discernment of the Holy Spirit is contingent on a life of authenticity. As noted in chapter one, Dubay emphasizes that challenges to the practice of discernment include our capacity for subjective illusion and misinterpretation of our experience. Countering these challenges requires authenticity. Prayer and accountability are foundational dimensions of this cultivation of authenticity. Throughout *Authenticity*, he describes multiple other dimensions of what he considers to be an authentic spiritual life. These include humility; moral behaviors including God-directedness, asceticism, detachment, and frugality; and communal unity. These markers of authenticity were evident in my ethnographic observations of the Marianists and my study of Marianist

²⁸⁶ See Dubay, *Authenticity*, 25.

virtues. In this context, discernment appears to come naturally to members of the Marianist community.

Revision and Enhancements to Dubay's Paradigm

The ethnographic study of a Marianist community provided me with insight into how a community of consecrated men discern the Holy Spirit. Throughout the course of conducting my ethnographic research, I paid careful attention to the way the Marianists live and what they said in their conversations with me that could benefit me in using their practice of discernment to enhance Dubay's paradigm. Every conversation I had gave me a glimpse into the life of the community and how the individual sees the Spirit working in their life and vocation. In reflection on these conversations, I began to take note of the areas where Dubay's paradigm could be revised. This section will address three areas of revision or enhancement I offer to Dubay's paradigm as a result of my ethnographic study of a Marianist community and my own theological reflection: approaches to authority, attention to religious diversity, and use of Scripture.

Approaches to Authority

An aspect of Dubay's authentic verification of discernment of the Holy Spirit is obedience to authority within a religious community. As explained in Chapter Two, Dubay identifies obedience freely given as a sign of the Holy Spirit. He argues that in a community filled with the Holy Spirit, members will obey and respect their superiors. Dubay discusses how one is faithful to God when one obeys the direction of one's superiors. The same goes for the community who obeys its appointed leaders' directives.²⁸⁷ Dubay continues discussing how obedience should be given to those with

²⁸⁷ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 175.

authority just as Jesus was obedient to the *Torah* (law) and to those who occupied the chair of Moses (Mt 23:1-3).²⁸⁸ Even though the Pharisees and scribes of the time were hypocritical, Jesus respected the office they held within the community because he was obedient to the law. This obedience is a sign of discernment for Dubay because he admits that sometimes the wrong individual can be either elected or appointed into a position of authority.²⁸⁹ However, if one supposes that the individual in a position of authority is obedient to the Holy See, then God will work through the superior's hearts and their actions (Rom 8:14).²⁹⁰

This approach to the exercise of authority within a religious community is distinct from that which I observed among the Marianists. As I explained in Chapter Four, the Marianists do have a Community Director. The Marianist who serves in this position is elected by the community to a three-year term. The director provides leadership and fraternal correction when necessary. But in Marianist practice, the director rarely makes decisions unilaterally on behalf of the community who would then be expected to obey. Marianist #2, as I have noted, explained, "For a community's sustainability, there needs to be a consistent dialogue with one another. When I served as director, many moons ago, I never made a decision on my own but brought concerns to the community as a whole. This is the beauty of our community. Everyone is both seen and heard."

Ladislas Orsy's model of communal discernment discussed in Chapter One is similar to that of the Marianists. Orsy addresses the relationship between authority and discernment within a community model. He states that healthy communities possess a

²⁸⁸ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 179.

²⁸⁹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 180.

²⁹⁰ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 181.

healthy integration of authority between those who possess authority and those who are obedient to such authority.²⁹¹ Orsy's model of communal discernment fits well with the Marianist communities' model of authority and discernment because everyone in the community is held as equals. What Orsy means by this is that the authority of a superior only exists in the cooperation and respect of the members of the community. Everyone, regardless of intelligence and experience, is held in the same regard within Orsy's community.²⁹² This creates a community of equals instead of a hierarchical community such as Dubay's. The Marianists live by a similar model as it has been shown by the testimony of a Marianist who has served as Community Director. In this position, he made sure each one of his brothers was both seen and heard in the manner of making a decision on behalf of the community.

Attention to Religious Diversity

Dubay writes as a Catholic priest for a Catholic audience. The sources of his theology of authenticity and discernment are Scripture, liturgy, magisterial church teaching, and other aspects of the Catholic tradition. In the case of my ethnographic study, several Marianists opened up with me about how sometimes their discernment and ministry led them to learn from those outside the Church. For example, several members of the community serve in different roles at the University of Dayton which consists of students, faculty, and staff of diverse faiths. Although the University of Dayton is a Catholic Marianist University, the institution is not made up just of Catholics or even individuals who identify as Christian for that matter. This requires those who minister

²⁹¹ Ladislav Orsy, *Discernment: Theology and Practice, Communal and Personal* (Collegeville, MD: Liturgical Press, 2020), 58.

²⁹² Orsy, *Discernment*, 64-5.

and serve the university community to have an open heart and mind to the perspective and dignity of someone who could disagree or not identify as Catholic. During my conversation with one of the Marianists who ministers to students, he commented that he often discerns and calls upon the Holy Spirit to grant him the insight and ability to meet people where they are in life and in their own faith journey. This Marianist fully accepts that it is not his ministry to convert those who do not identify as Catholic to Catholicism but instead accompany them in understanding how God is working in people's lives through the Spirit.

When I asked how some members of this Marianist community ended up ministering at the university, the average response was “the Spirit led my superiors and me to come to U.D.” This answer enthralled me, so I followed up on how these members discern how to minister to those who are not practicing Catholics. One Marianist responded, “well God wants to make Himself known to everyone whether they are Catholic or not. I often pray and listen for the Holy Spirit's wisdom and courage to embrace this challenge of ministering to those who either identify as Christian, Jewish, Muslim, atheist, etc. We are all human beings who are directed towards God.” This Marianist continued, “Let me tell you it was challenging at the beginning because I had never ministered to young adults. I felt I was doing things wrong and was worried I was discouraging people from the relationship God so desired to have with them. However, I remember one time when I was praying for courage and strength to continue my ministry. I had this feeling of God's peace, God's *shalom* if you will, hit me like a ton of bricks. I finally woke up to the reality that my work and the mission of this community is to be an example. In conversing and ministering to students on campus, I am living out my

vocation as a Marianist, which by its nature is to be inspiring. In accepting God's *shalom* and confidence in myself I have been able to become a better minister, spiritual director, and Marianist."²⁹³ I was struck by the confidence and conviction in the answers I received that were similar to the one above. It was because of answers such as this that I felt the insightful discernment and prayer habits of the community to be authentic approaches to the Holy Spirit.

The conviction of the Marianist who said "God makes himself known to everyone whether they are Catholic or not" is consistent with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Decree on Ecumenism, states of Protestant and Orthodox Christians:

On the other hand, Catholics must gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren. It is right and salutary to recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood. For God is always wonderful in His works and worthy of all praise. Nor should we forget that anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can be a help to our own edification. Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a deeper realization of the mystery of Christ and the Church.²⁹⁴

And, *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Catholic Church to Non-Christian Religions, affirms both that the fullness of religious life is found in Christ who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:16) and also that the Church "regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless

²⁹³ See Dubay, *Authenticity*, 218. Dubay discusses how the feeling of *shalom* is a feeling that the world cannot give and is a gift from God.

²⁹⁴ *UR*, sec. 4.

often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.”²⁹⁵ The Marianist community practices this kind of respect for persons of diverse religious faiths, and their experience suggests that Dubay’s paradigm would be enhanced with attention to developments in Catholic ecumenical and interreligious relations at Vatican II and in the decades that followed.

Use of Scripture

Marianist life is informed by the proclamation of Scripture in daily liturgies, the practice of *Lectio Divina* on Friday evenings, and the use of Scripture in personal prayer. Similarly, Dubay’s approach to discernment of the Holy Spirit is presented as biblical theology. His book is shaped by the overarching narrative of Scripture and his reflection is supported by citations from specific portions of the bible including the prophets, the Gospels, and the epistles of Paul. He cites biblical commentaries and dictionaries and his footnotes reference Scripture scholars including Alois Stoger, Gerard Schnieder, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, Max Zerwick, and others. However, he typically does not integrate this scholarship into the body of the text. Moreover, the scholarship that he references is dated; *Authenticity* was first published in 1977 and an updated edition was published in 1997. His paradigm that intends to be a biblical theology for discernment would be enhanced with more integration of biblical scholarship and additional updating.

Conclusion

In review, this chapter affirmed and offered both revisions and enhancements to Dubay’s discernment paradigm as a result of my ethnographic study. I have highlighted

²⁹⁵ Second Vatican Council, “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, 28 October 1965” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), sec. 2.

the similarities in discernment and the spiritual life such as an emphasis on prayer, accountability, and authenticity. From there this chapter examined three areas of revision or enhancements to Dubay's paradigm such as approaches to authority, attention to religious diversity, and the use of scripture. In concluding this thesis, I will review the resulting criteria and method for discerning the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

RESULTING CRITERIA AND METHOD FOR DISCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT

In examining both Dubay's paradigm and the results of my ethnographic study, I feel I have come to understand better what it means to discern the Holy Spirit. In distinguishing a criteria and method of discernment, I must reaffirm a point that I made previously that every person is different so what I am about to relay may not meet the needs of every individual. Dubay in writing this book has probably helped the faithful understand what it means to authentically discern the Holy Spirit. His paradigm is still being published and read by people today, such as myself, in addressing concepts and issues of a fruitful discernment. The Marianists continue their mission of forming people and communities in the faith. This community's work for the immediate Dayton area is extensive as they both counsel and minister to the university community and beyond. For example, my faith and approach to discernment has been enhanced through seeking spiritual direction from the Marianists since beginning graduate school at the University of Dayton. Both Dubay and the Marianists authentically discern the Holy Spirit in their own respective ways, each producing valid outcomes and situations where people authentically discerned the Holy Spirit. The criteria and method that I wish to discuss moving forward in this section may seem both simple and repetitive, but each has been mentioned in both Dubay and my conversations with the Marianists. The resulting criteria and method for discerning the Holy Spirit consist of several factors: humility, prayer, virtue, and community. In the end I will offer a short reflection on the steps I would have taken to better enhance this thesis.

Humility

During my conversation with Marianist #3, I experienced first-hand the humility of a Marianist. Marianist #3 in discussing prayer commented, “I mean if I am honest with you sometimes in prayer, I have no idea what is going on. My mind will go blank especially as I get older. However, I find my subconscious simply calling for the Holy Spirit to lead me. I am not a spiritual master. I am definitely an elder and more experienced than some in this community, but I would not consider myself an expert. I consider my life and charism as a Marianist to be simplistic and spontaneous.” Marianist #3 amazed me because during our conversation I was immediately taken aback by the simplicity of his life. Marianist #3 is a man who has spent his life serving in several different roles as both a Marianist and member of the university community. He has counseled and advised a number of individuals and groups in spiritual exercises. In my judgement, Marianist #3 is an experienced spiritual leader. However, he refuses to see himself in that light because he knows that all that he has been able to achieve is a grace from God. He stated to me, “I am doing God’s work. My work is secondary to His.” Dubay discusses how those who were humble were often likely to detect the “divine mind” and the messages relayed by the Holy Spirit.²⁹⁶ Hence the reason why humility is a necessary step to authentically discerning.

Following the example of Marianist #3, one should accept that there are things about God and the Holy Spirit that one will never understand. One should never see oneself as a spiritual expert or mystic because it can inflate one’s own ego.²⁹⁷ The inflated ego creates barriers in the spiritual life, and one starts to interpret one’s own

²⁹⁶ See Dubay, *Authenticity*, 125.

²⁹⁷ See Hakenewerth, *Growing in the Virtues of Jesus*, 21.

wants and desires as being the will of the Holy Spirit. When one practices humility, one is very similar to Marianist #3 who describes his life as simple and spontaneous. One should see oneself as a student of the truth, seeking the wisdom to discern, and always remaining open to the direction the Holy Spirit is leading one.

Prayer

Much has been said on prayer throughout the course of this thesis. Every chapter addresses the importance of prayer, making prayer an essential aspect of the discerning of the Holy Spirit. One can really only approach the Holy Spirit through prayer as it has been affirmed by both Dubay and the Marianists. Dubay towards the beginning of his whole discernment pedagogy discusses that God speaks to one through actively engaging in one's prayer.²⁹⁸ For the Marianists it was very clear to observe that their communities are rooted in prayer with members praying multiple times together throughout the day. The Marianists both begin and end the day with prayer and during the day are supposed to find time for individual prayer. Many members of this Marianist community go about this in different ways. For some, sitting in a chair and contemplating helps them connect with the Holy Spirit. Others prefer to go for walks around the neighborhood keeping their mind focused on God. Overall, prayer is an essential aspect of their discernment practice.

Marianist #4 stated that when he hits an obstacle in his discernment, he usually will go for a fast-paced walk. He recounted that when he was asked to serve in a different role for the province, he spent a lot of his time walking the neighborhood he lived in at the time. "It was not that I felt lost and needed to clear my head," said Marianist #4, "but

²⁹⁸ See Dubay, *Authenticity*, 27; 56-7.

that I prefer to meet God in the outdoors with the fresh air in my lungs. I see discernment as a journey and what is a journey without a little walking?” Marianist #4’s approach to prayer is not a traditional one but it is an effective approach for him, which validates the method.

Another element of prayer that aids in discerning the Holy Spirit but is not necessarily critical to authentically discerning is *shalom*. Throughout this thesis *shalom* has been brought up in both chapter two in discussing Dubay’s discernment paradigm and in chapter five highlighting certain corresponding themes as a result of my ethnographic study of the Marianists. Several of the Marianists mentioned this feeling of *shalom* in times of discernment and their ministry as Marianists. The stories in which I heard *shalom* specifically mentioned came as a result of letting the Holy Spirit work through the individual Marianist, such as the case of the Marianist who serves as a minister and spiritual director to the students at the University of Dayton. However, the feeling of *shalom* does not come at the request of people, as this Marianist noted: “God’s *shalom* came as a result of many hours of prayer and searching for answers.” The peace one has the potential of receiving is referred to by Dubay as *shalom* as well. The *shalom*, as Dubay discusses, comes as a result of perfecting discernment and a “vibrant relationship with God”.²⁹⁹ *Shalom* is a peace that can only be given by God (Jn 14:27) because God is peace (Eph 2:14, 17). Although *shalom* is not a necessity for discerning the Holy Spirit, for both the Marianists and Dubay *shalom* is an affirmation that they have discerned correctly to feel the peace that only God can give (Jn 14:27).

²⁹⁹ See Dubay, *Authenticity*, 218. “The root forms which *shalom* comes signifies completion, finishing, perfection, fullness.”

Virtue

Both Dubay and the Marianists have an established system of virtues that aids in their discernment paradigms. Hence, an established understanding of virtues and morals should be distinguished in order to aid in one's discernment of the Holy Spirit. In the case of Dubay, as it has been mentioned in Chapter Two, there are three categories that signs of the Holy Spirit are classified by in his text. One of categories Dubay establishes is moral behaviors. It is the belief of Dubay that one's moral conscience and inner spirit is better attuned to discern the Holy Spirit because one has established direction and training to recognize what is good. Therefore, one must be held accountable for one's actions if one is to discern properly and authentically.

The Marianists have a similar understanding as evident in the Chaminade's system of virtues. As it has been discussed extensively in Chapter Four, Chaminade developed a system of virtues to members of sodalities and the Society of Mary as different stages of spiritual development. This ordered system broken down into virtues of preparation, purification, and consummation centered Chaminade's hopes for the spiritual development and formation of the Marianists. Understanding of what is authentic is achieved through Chaminade's system of virtues, especially in the preparation virtue of the silences. During the course of my ethnographic study of a Marianist community, every participant in some capacity made reference to Chaminade's system of virtues in both their work and prayer life.

Community

The Marianists have taught me much of what it means to be a community of faith. Being a product of Marianist education (in attending a Marianist high school and now

graduate school at a Catholic Marianist University) I have witnessed, been influenced by, and been a part of a community that seeks to live out the Gospel. Therefore, community plays an important role within the discernment process, and Dubay's account of communal discernment is inadequate. However, through engaging thinkers such as Pope Francis, Ladislav Orsy, Ignatius of Loyola, William Joseph Chaminade, and the members of the Marianist community, I have seen the beauty of communal discernment. It is my belief that because the Marianists live in a community that I got the sense that discerning the Holy Spirit was not a complicated process and appears to come naturally to certain members of the community. Their community encourages, supports, and challenges members of the community to be faithful to the promises they made to their order and to God by praying and living in community.

Multiple times a day, the community gathers together to celebrate the sacraments, pray, and eat a meal together. They live together as a family would in shared spaces and with events that members of the community are asked to participate in together. The community gathers together at least once a week to discuss ongoing communal formation, upcoming events, budget concerns, and to address both communal observations and concerns. Living in a community has enabled the Marianists to continue to communicate with one another on a range of topics from seeking advice to addressing concerns with another member.

The level of accountability the Marianists have for one another is admirable and can play an important role in discerning the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is recommended that if one is to discern authentically the Holy Spirit that one has some sort of community to keep one accountable to the practice of prayer and discernment. I am fortunate to have

had the opportunity to pray and live amongst members of the Marianist community on several occasions. In each opportunity, I have seen first-hand how the Holy Spirit moves through their charism and the mission of their congregation. I have witnessed the accountability a community has for its members and have been part of conversations about their charism and how members live out their vocations as Sons of Mary. All this is to say that while the community structure is not a requirement for discernment, it definitely aids in one's discernment. I say this because much of my conversations around discernment with the Marianists were accompanied by some reference to their communal life helping them discern properly.

Moving Forward

Upon reflecting on the completion of this thesis, I believe that I have just begun my study and that there is more that I wish to learn about what it means to discern the Holy Spirit. As it has been mentioned in previous chapters, discernment is a hard concept to define and understand. However, it has been the intention of this thesis to demonstrate a method and criteria in discerning the Holy Spirit. This comes as a result of my research and ethnographic study, but the resulting conclusion could have looked different if I had used a paradigm other than Dubay's. All of this to say is that there is not a singular method of approaching discernment. In this concluding section, I seek to offer a reflection of what I would suggest the steps moving forward could be.

These last eight months working on this project, I have come to better understand what it means to discern but because of events outside of my control, such as a global pandemic, much of my research has been limited. In doing this research, I also had to teach myself the principles of ethnography and because of time constraints I was not able

to spend the necessary time to fully understand and engage with other ethnographic data. It is my understanding that those who have ventured into ethnography at the University of Dayton have engaged with faculty members of the Sociology department who have conducted ethnographic research before, such as Dr. Miranda Hallett. When I learned of Dr. Hallett, it was already too late into the semester and the window to conduct my ethnographic study in the format approved by the Institutional Review Board during the pandemic had already closed. I came into ethnography by engaging with sources and manuals instead of talking with those who have successfully conducted ethnographic research. It is my belief that early conversations with experienced ethnographers would have enhanced this study.

If given the opportunity and time, I would have spent more time in the ethnographic portion of this thesis research. Although I found my conversations to be bountiful and although they provided much material with which to assess Dubai's paradigm, I do wish I could have spent more time in the observation element of ethnography. Due to time restrictions and restrictions necessitated by the pandemic, I was really only able to spend a weekend with the Marianists which was enough to make initial observations about the community's discernment and prayer methodologies. If I had been able to spend more time living within the community, I could have collected more data on the habits and routine of the community witnessing first-hand how the Holy Spirit works through the Marianists. My initial intention was to spend time with several Marianist communities in the Dayton area; however, due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in both Dayton and Montgomery County, I made the decision to limit my ethnographic research to one community. If I was continuing this research, I would have

also expanded my research into the ways in which both the Society of Mary and the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (Marianist Sisters) discern the Spirit. Some questions I would seek to answer include: does discernment look different based on gender? Is the relationship that the Marianist Brothers and Priests have with the Spirit different from the Marianist Sisters? In what ways has Chaminade's system of virtues aided in the Marianist Sisters' discernment practices? Is it different from the way the Marianist Brothers and Priests use them? How has their experience in religious formation influenced their discernment methodologies? These are only the initial questions I would seek to answer in comparing how both of these lived out discernment practices differ from a paradigm such as Dubay's. Overall, the more information I could have gathered the stronger my thesis could have been.

This thesis does not conclude my own theological journey in understanding and discerning the Holy Spirit. However, what it has done is enabled me to think and engage with those who authentically discern the Holy Spirit on a seemingly daily basis. As I have mentioned previously, I have my own questions and interests in the practice of prayer and discernment and how the Holy Spirit influences both of these practices. Dubay is in like vein a member of a religious order, and he has extensive experience working with religious communities. Can his approach or that of the Marianists be practical for someone such as myself who is not a member of a religious order? After conducting my interviews and reading Dubay, I am left with many questions about discernment. For example, when does God speak, how does God speak, and what is experienced when God speaks? Dubay writes that "many of us seem to assume that 'listening to the Spirit' means hearing neat, specific conclusions that God somehow inserts into the mind"—but

that this is not how God speaks.³⁰⁰ In another section of the text, reflecting on St. John of the Cross' cautions about locutions, Dubay explains, "the deepest value in a divine communication does not lie in clear concepts or blueprints for future action. It lies in a deeper drinking of the divine, a drinking that is general, dark, nonconceptual, love-immersed."³⁰¹ Members of religious orders like the Carmelites, Marists, and Marianists may not have clear concepts about the Holy Spirit but they do have formation periods, community constitutions, community leadership, and missions that give them a kind of blueprint for action. What about those of us who do not belong to religious orders? We are the majority in the Catholic Church. How can we imbibe a deeper drinking of the divine? How can we discern in this nonconceptual darkness where it is that the Holy Spirit is leading? My conversations in courses during the graduate program, receiving spiritual direction since beginning this program through the guidance of an advisor, and writing this thesis have brought me closer to understanding the *gravitas* of the Holy Spirit. This thesis accomplishes much in the time I have been given to complete this project but defending this thesis does not stop the interest and questions surrounding discerning the Holy Spirit.

³⁰⁰ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 90.

³⁰¹ Dubay, *Authenticity*, 117.

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