

True Wealth is... Discerning the Voice through the noise.

They say a mother can discern her own child's cry among many. They say the same thing about elephants. My friend was moved to tears when her newborn grandson immediately turned toward the sound of his father's voice in the delivery room -the voice that had read books and sung songs to him even before he was born.

"Before you were even born, I know you..." said God in Jeremiah 1:5. What would it be like if you, too, could recognize and turn to the Voice, who saw you into being - the one who created you for a purpose?

All of us are hearing voices in our heard -just look at anyone walking down the road and you'll see some people wearing headphones -carrying on conversations or listening to an invisible 'other' on the line. Those who aren't listening through headphones are listening to self-talk.

"You'll never be good enough.."

Or, "If you don't make this meeting on time your name is mud."

Or, perhaps, old family tapes are running in the background... "We are not from good stock." Or, "No one in this family has ever gotten a divorce."

Discernment is a word we don't hear used often enough. In the Greek language, it is a feminine noun translated from the root *anakrino* - meaning to examine or judge closely, and the root *diakrino* - to separate out, to investigate, to examine.

For me, the Voice above the noise always points to a greater good, something noble and not self-serving.

For me, the Voice above the noise always points towards justice.

For me, the Voice above the noise directs me toward a next step action and/or faith that the steps I do take, unseeing, will lead me to where I need to be. And, honestly people, I have to admit that sometimes I don't think God cares so much about where you go, as long as you both go on the ride together.

Let's face it, Jesus and his disciples had a lot of just hanging around time - shooting the breeze, perhaps, until the next miracle was called for.

Not every moment is an endorphin rush. When a friend was babysitting her 5-year-old granddaughter, she would finally say, exhausted, "Ok, Honey, what say we lay down and take a nap together?" Finally, the child would acquiesce and lay down beside her. Only a few moments had passed when the 5-year-old said out loud, "Uh Oh!" My friend sat straight up and asked, "What's wrong? Are you okay?" The child looked at her and sighed - "I suddenly felt a lot of boredom coming along."

That little girl is like many of us - who think that any undirected minute is not to be tolerated - and avoided at all cost.

Another friend of mine has a 7-year-old who insists that every lunch made for school have a gourmet surprise in it - one made from scratch. Her mother said, "I rue the day we started watching the Cooking Channel together every day after school."

If you are asking God to direct your every daily activity - the next Voice you hear may be a snore - as a divine nap time might be called for.

This is why I believe knowing your mission is so important. Knowing your mission sets you on a general course that allows innovation, flexibility, and freedom.

Little Joan heard voices as a child. At first, they just said, "Be a good girl. Go to church." And then, as she got older, the voices became more singular, and more urgent. Finally, she could discern only two words above the noise,

"SAVE FRANCE."

And that she did.

She didn't receive much, if any instruction after that - but so sure she was that she heard the Voice correctly, that she staked her life on it. Literally. And the rest is history.

The Voice doesn't always come with angel wings fluttering over a heavenly chorus. Sometimes, perhaps even most of the time, the Voice is still and small. (Hence the well-known phrase, "The Still Small Voice.") And when you tune into it, and tune out all other shouting noises, you will not let it be still and small anymore. It will become the marching order coursing through your veins.

Another way to hear the Voice is simply to stay ready and be yourself and take the next step in front of you.

Mary Oliver, the poet, writes about a donkey who didn't realize Who it was carrying into Jerusalem, yet faithfully decided just to take the next step.

The voice - sometimes - is simply telling you to take the next step.

Questions

1. When do you feel you have heard - or had a sense of the Voice of God?
2. What do you do to discern the Voice above the noise?