1. Discernment also includes what is referred to as the discernment of spirits. In any discernment process you can be pulled both ways, what may seem good in one sense may not be so in another (“All that glitters, isn’t gold”). This is where the good spirit is working for us and the bad spirit is working against us. (Bad spirit is the enemy of our human nature.)
2. **The Father draws me.** We are aware the Father is constantly drawing each human heart to union with Himself in and through Christ: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him” Jn 6:44. This drawing registers within us. We feel it within our hearts. It registers in our feelings, moods, impulses, desires and urges. This is happening to everybody, the good and the bad. Even the most malicious sinner is being drawn, whether he is aware of it or not, or whether he has deadened his heart against feeling it, is another matter…… but it is happening.
3. It may surprise us to learn this, but it is a fact; God reveals Himself more in our interior moods and feelings than he does in clear and distinct ideas. This does not mean that God does not reveal Himself in our intellects. We are all aware that much of what we do is in the sub-conscious motivation (Karl Jung) without stopping to reflect on the feeling that is motivating us.
4. If we want to find God most intimately then we must allow God to draw us to the core of our being and we must become of the feelings operating there. It is by doing this that we become aware of who we really are and whom God intended us to be and all that God is giving us.
5. The goal of our life is holiness – wholeness – complete union with God. We can attain to this union only if we listen to Him and respond to His constant invitations to draw nearer. He draws each of us in a special way, i.e., He makes His presence felt in a unique way. He also makes His presence known at the level of our being where our feelings impulses and desires register. However, there is another side, our sinful nature also registers at the same level in our hearts, in our feelings, etc. This leaves us with a problem: If I am in touch with myself at that level of my being, then I am conscious of these feelings as well. Which ones are leading me to the Lord and which ones are not. I have to sort them out. We may find it hard to get in touch with our feelings. Perhaps our early life training urged us to the opposite, to pay no attention to them.

**It is important to know how we feel:** We are not talking about superficial sentiments but of the movements of the core of our being – deep in our hearts where God has placed his word. If we stay away from this area – our real selves will be missing much of what the Spirit is saying to us and we will become untrue to ourselves because it is from this level of our being that we make decisions and that we discover our true selves, our relationship with God, our true identity.

**We discern what has to be:**

1. Faced
2. Decided
3. Interpreted
4. Acted upon

in the light of this identity (me).

**Faith life:**

Any discernment is going to depend on my faith life. The reality is; in the faith life of each person when we come face to face with such basic questions as:

1. Is God real?
2. Does Jesus risen and alive mean anything to me?

If we draw together all the strands of our faith experiences then we can say: **“Yes He is real! I have experience to back it up”.** Ultimately, our faith will become real and more mature.

**Examen and prayer:** It is in prayer and the mystery of His plan that God gradually reveals Himself to us for all of reality in Christ. It is in prayer that we experience His challenge to us, personally, this is why the Examen is prayer and is related to our daily and personal contemplative prayer. Our prayer would be empty if it did not order our lives to respond to Him. It is the daily Examen that helps us to see sense and recognises those interior invitations of the Lord that guide and deepen this ordering. To be prayerful means to find God in all things, not just in time or in formal prayer.

**Format of the Examen**

We must keep in mind the goal of the Examen – to develop a discerning heart with a discerning vision that will not be operating just for ten or fifteen minutes during the Examen but during the whole day. The following five steps help us towards the goal of the Examen:

1. Thanksgiving
2. Prayer for light
3. Examination
4. Contrition for sorrow
5. Resolution

**Thanksgiving:**

If we see the Examen as related to our prayer we will readily understand why it is good to begin the Examen with thanksgiving. In our prayer life we realise we are poor. We possess nothing, not even ourselves. We come before God as those who have been gifted by Him. We owe Him everything. The deeper our faith becomes, the more truly we become aware of our utter poverty the more we are struck by God’s great goodness to us. This should become an attitude that abides with us – and remains part of our conscious awareness. During the time of the Examen we bring gratitude into our conscious awareness so that we have an abiding consciousness of who God is and how good He is. Here we will believe that all is gift and this awareness can change our lives.

**Prayer for the light of the Spirit:**

He can give us the insight into our lives. It is important that we ask for His Spirit to give us an insight into the mystery of who we are.

**Examination:**

This consists in examining ourselves but on what should the examination take place? We should not count up our failures or victories. Our real concern is **Faith** and what has been happening to us since our last Examen.

**Contrition and sorrow in me:**

A growing awareness of my sinfulness (my lack of response to love) should arouse in me sorrow and wonder, a sense of deep joy, a growing mistrust of self and a firm trust in God, a humble awareness of my weakness(es) and I am being converted from sinner to Son of God.

**Hopeful resolution for the future:**

Acknowledge that we can change. Our life will be different each day. If it were to be the same it would be a sure sign it would be sure sign we’ve not moved on in our spiritual life.