

Theory 8

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, PART II

Introduction: Once we have discerned the means to understand what the right thing to do is (discovering the moral object, intention, and circumstance), we now have to understand how to further apply this virtue. Prudence involves a series of steps, each of which must be accomplished in order for us to perform an act prudently.

Three Steps to a Good Decision

There are three steps to making a good decision: Deliberation; Judgment, and Execution

The first step is to deliberate.

This is where you gather all relevant information about the decision at hand. We want our decisions based on reality, but too often we base our decisions on disordered desires and feelings rather than on what is true and good. So, the first thing we need to do is get to the truth of the matter – get to Reality.

Gather the facts, all the relevant information, especially the teachings of Jesus handed down by the Church. Separate the relevant from the irrelevant info. Weigh the pros and cons. Take counsel with those who are more experienced, and knowledgeable in the matter at hand. Take counsel with God – Pray. Talk to God about it – ask Him what to do; listen to Him. If it's a big decision take counsel with your Spiritual Director.

Then wait. Wait as long as you can before making a decision to give time for more relevant information to arise. Many things work themselves out without our intervention if we learn to wait. Failure to deliberate adequately is called rashness. This is the failure to think before you act; the failure to look before you leap and that is deadly. Are you rash? Do you make hasty decisions?

The second step is to make a judgement, make a decision.

This is when you stop vacillating, and you say I am going to go this way - I am going to do this thing. Narrow down and eliminate options, then decide. The failure to judge, to decide, is called negligence or indecision. It's otherwise known as paralysis by analysis. This is where we're just thinking things over forever and we never reach a decision or take action. Do you ever suffer from paralysis by analysis? Do you have a hard time making decisions?

The third step is execution – following through to the end.

This is where you take action and get it done. It's where you fulfill what you said you'd do, where you carry out your judgement.

The failure to act or execute is called irresolution or inconstancy. This is the failure to follow through on your decisions all the way to the point of completion. Do you struggle with a lack of follow-through?

There are three steps to prudence:

Deliberate

Decide

Take action and follow through to the end

There are three dangers to avoid:

Rashness – Failure to think before you act

Indecisiveness – Failure to make a decision

Irresoluteness – Failure to act or to follow through to completion

Which bad habit do you have?

Once you identify your weakness, make the conscious decision to work on that area of prudence, and by practice and grace you will improve. It will get easier, and you will grow in the art of making good decisions.

How do we know the will of God?

God has revealed His will.

He revealed His will for us in general, meaning how He **designed** us, through the **Commandments** and the teachings of Jesus found in **Scripture** and **Tradition** that are summarized in the CCC, especially in part II and III. If you want to know the will of God for your life in general – read the **Catechism**.

We know the will of God by **listening in mental prayer**.

Pope Benedict says: “The first and essential thing is a listening heart, so that God, not we, may reign. The Kingdom of God comes by way of a listening heart. That is the path. And that is what we must pray for again and again.”

If you spend time asking God what to do and listening patiently in silence. One way or another He will show you. Jesus said:

Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find;
knock, and the door will be opened to you (Mt. 7:7).

Through the **Rosary**, Mary disposes us to know and do the will of God.

God’s will for us in particular is known by the **duties and responsibilities of our state in life** as a – husband, wife, parent, student, professional work responsibilities and those inside of the home; son or daughter of elderly parents...

- What other commitments have you made?
- Are you sure these other commitments are God’s will?

Our state in life comes with responsibilities that are the will of God for us.

The surest way to know the will of God is through the **circumstances we cannot control or change** – we could call it “Obedience to Events.”

If something is beyond your responsibility, your control or your ability to change it, then God, in His Providence, has allowed it. And we can still be at peace because God makes all things work for good for those who love Him. This is where we are called to surrender to the will of God. Surrender does not mean to give up. Surrender to God simply means this:

You do what is within your power; **Let God do what He wants** through all the people and events that are beyond your power or your zone of responsibility.

If we want peace of soul, we must not only do the will of God, but we must also learn to surrender, to accept what we did not choose, do not like and cannot change, trusting that God works all things for good for those who love Him.

Everyone needs a spiritual director or mentor.

Someone with whom we can talk about the important decisions in life. Proverbs 28:26 reminds us that “He who trusts his own mind is a fool.”

Let us conclude with this great quote from St. Francis De Sales. He writes: “Do you want to advance confidently along the path of perfection and the love of God? Then seek someone who can direct you. This is the most important advice I can give you...Since it is so important...to find a good guide for this journey that you are undertaking, pray perseveringly that God will give you one after His own heart. Doubt not that God will give him to you, even if he has to send an angel from heaven.”

Now we see the extreme importance of our undertaking in learning how to become a spiritual mentor for others! This virtue is essential not only for ourselves when it comes to forming a plan of life, making a good decision, or discerning God’s will, but also for assisting a mentee. May the Lord continue to guide us how to live according to what the right thing to do is, how to do it in the right way, with the right time, and in the right measure. Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom, pray for us!