

# DISCERNMENT - REFLECTION



I ask for what I desire as we begin this topic



I pray that my entire being become open to God's grace



I imagine these texts being addressed to me, and note my response

## Grace: To let our souls be sweetly, lightly, and gently touched by God

**Context:** Pope Julius III was asked by Emperor Charles V to make Francis Borgia a cardinal. Borgia asked for Ignatius's advice on whether to accept the position. In the following letter, Ignatius describes a three-day process of interior discernment that he underwent to determine his own position on the matter.

"In the matter of the cardinal's hat, I thought I would give some account to you, as if to my own soul, regarding what took place within me, for God's greater glory. As soon as I learned for certain that the Emperor had nominated you and that the Pope was willing to make you a cardinal, I immediately had this impulse or spiritual movement to oppose it in any way I could. However, being unsure of God's will because of the many reasons that occurred to me on both sides, I ordered all the priests in the community to say Mass and those not priests to offer their prayers for three days that I might be guided wholly to God's greater glory. Over this period of three days, there were times when, as I reflected and conferred about the matter, I experienced certain fears, or a lack of that freedom of spirit for speaking out and opposing it. I thought, "How do I know what God our Lord wants to do?" and did not find within myself total certainty about opposing it. At other times, when I went to my regular prayers, I felt within myself that these fears receded. Repeating this petition at intervals, sometimes with this fear and sometimes with the opposite, I finally found myself, during my regular prayer on the third day and continuously thereafter, with a judgment so complete and a will so calm and free to do all I could with the Pope and the cardinals to oppose it that if I failed to do so, I would be, and am, quite certain that I could give no good account of myself to God our Lord, but instead a wholly bad one. However, I held then and hold now that there would be no contradiction in its being God's will for me to take this course while others take a different one and the dignity be conferred upon you. The same divine Spirit could move me to this course for one set of reasons and move others to the opposite for different ones, with the outcome being what the Emperor indicated."

From the Portal to Jesuit Studies - Ignatius of Loyola: Letters and Instructions, ed. John W. Padberg, et al. St. Louis, Mo.: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996, "To Francis Borgia, Rome, June 5, 1552," pg. 376-377.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is stirring within me as I read Ignatius' letter? What decisions come to mind?
2. How do I make my decisions? What influences the choices I make?