

Discernment and the creative process of art-- Continued

Part IV: Preparations

Our next step in preparing to paint was to choose out of a large bouquet of flowers a few stems and sprigs and bring them back to our workspace along with a smaller vase and simply arrange them. This was practice in recognizing complementary colors, creating form, and texture. It also reminded us that creating is part of everyday life. Our lives are full of the creatively simple, the holiness of the ordinary.

These preparations: slowing down and quieting our spirits, focusing on a guiding statement, and engaging in a small creative activity were like small nourishing disciplines in cultivating discernment as a way of life. I began to see parallels between what I had been reading on the subject of discernment and what we were engaging in to prepare to paint. Slowing down and listening as well as praying are ways to “stand at the crossroads” and “look” as Lois Lindbloom points out from Jeremiah 6:16. Writing out a guiding statement that will keep us focused reminded me of the foundation of Scripture as we listen for God’s voice in the midst of and through our lives. As Jeannette Bakke points out in *Holy Invitations*, any resolution in life we come to needs to be compatible with Scripture. We study and meditate on God’s word to “hide” it in our hearts where it becomes part of the whole process of living and being before the face of God.

Arranging the flowers served to help us at the painting workshop remember that we engage in creative acts every day. We just don’t recognize them as such. When I give my journaling workshops I always tell the participants that the difference between an ordinary moment and a spiritual moment is whether or not we are paying attention. “In Him we live and move and have our being,” says Paul in Acts 17:28. In this way all our moments are spiritual because our very existence is rooted in Him. Cultivating discernment as a way of life is to look, listen and receive these moments we live in and move through. It is to both get ourselves out of the way in order to hear, see, taste and know, and to cooperate with the Spirit in exercising each of these acts.