

Discernment and the creative process of art-- Continued

Part VII: Culture of Community

And yet, since it is not just about us, this workshop also included the reality of community. Most of the women attending had never really done anything artistic as an adult and brought with them childhood experiences of feeling bad about their artistic endeavors. They remembered joyfully coloring or drawing on sidewalk with chalk. But all too soon this stopped when they were teased because of their attempts. Overcoming those messages in their heads during this workshop was an added challenge. Our painting guide encouraged us (the clear voice of the Holy Spirit) to stop what we were doing and walk around to see what others were doing. I felt a strong leading to encourage these women by showing interest, asking questions, and praising their efforts. We so often get caught up in our own struggles, trying to work out our own complex life that we forget God has given us a culture of fellow sojourners with which to share our experience and truth. As we engage in spiritual direction we are aware that our directees bring a variety of experiences to the process. We come alongside as they move or as they get stuck. We ask questions, show interest and encourage them. We surrender to the Holy Spirit. We get ourselves out of the way. We remind them as God continually reminds us that what makes us truly human, truly bearers of the divine is not in how perfectly we do life, but what we experience when we look, listen and receive in the process.

Conclusion

This is what I learned about discernment then. It is about seeing, hearing, receiving. It is about being aware prayerfully in the best laid plans and in the unexpected. It is about believing that even when what we imagine and create falls apart or gets sabotaged, even in the wreckage of that God is there. God gifted me abundantly through this painting workshop and the readings and presentations on discernment in this unit. Through all this He kept reminding me that he is present - living and present - in the simplest messiest acts of creating life. As Aristotle reminds us, art is not about representing the outward appearance of things but the inward significance, so also does God invite us always to stop look and listen in every ordinary moment and find His extraordinary presence in all things.