

The Sacred Door - “A Portal to the Heart”

Psalm 24

Rise up ye gates. Stand tall ye doors. Who is coming? The Lord God almighty. The God of hosts.

The Sacred Door – A Portal to the Heart

the sacred door-s

This document is about discernment of guidance (“Guidance”). By Guidance I mean thoughts, words, deeds, feelings, dreams, or visions, not from one’s self, but interiorly obtained. Discernment means a decision to act, and that ultimately, if from God provides good fruits, and if from Satan provides bad fruits.

Stated another way, true Guidance provides extreme value. Another word for extreme value is consolation. The consolation is meant to help carry us from where we are to where God wants us to be. It is God’s living word within us that is the pool that refreshes. Whenever we are in a deep presence of God, we feel small. For example, the humility we feel is a gift from God, a consolation, that we might know that we are not alone. For God alone can do the mighty deeds of love for the common good. God’s profound love of us is known in Guidance. In a sense Guidance is a sacred door, a portal to the heart and the title of this document is The Sacred Door.

Is God talking to you?

Nothing is more disruptive to a person’s life than if God talks to them. For if you love God, you will hear God. That can entail interpretation, mistakes, hardship and changes, as well as joy. In my experience I have made many mistakes, but the outcome of coming to God is beyond measure. This document seeks to permit any to overcome some of the mistakes I have made shown below. I never sought to open the Sacred Door. It was opened for me. It became a portal to my heart, and my cross.

By What Authority

I, Jeff Liautaud, am a Roman Catholic. I write as a Catholic. Yet as founder of Loquate I am one engaged in interfaith dialogue. God has made me so. So I have prepared this checklist to be helpful to anyone. On one of my church’s basilicas high up on the crown of the ceiling are the words: Bless all people O God with peace. (See principles of interfaith dialogue at Loquate.tv.) So my church supports all people.

You may ask by what authority do I speak? Since 1985 I have received Guidance. My church will usually offer no official assistance due to a non committal policy as to the nature of any living person’s guidance until after the person is deceased. I felt alone and extremely vulnerable at times. I was helped by many priests. But it was not until Leo Okonkwo spoke to me that I was able to drop my attachment to my consolations. He asked me if I could wait. He said my church was doing the right thing. Even without someone like Leo having experience like my own, through some of priests I was directed to Doctors of my Church, those who have gone before me, pillars of my church, some of whom experienced what I experienced. It was thru them that I experienced overwhelming joy. It is thru the truth of authentic leaders that I understand loving my church, and that anyone can understand loving their church.

I put what I learned from priests, from myself, and from Doctors of my Church, all together. I have found this checklist to be quite helpful to me. If what I say makes sense to you, then follow it. If it does not make sense to you, do not follow it. I say trust yourself. Before taking advice

even from a so called expert, the advice must first make good sense to you. You take responsibility for your own path in coming to God.

Your path to God is sacred. You make it so. I am one person. Discernment of Guidance is personal and general. It is personal because it involves one's own religion, one's own path to God. It is general because, irrespective of what is one's religion or even for one with no stated religion, or even an avowed atheist, every person is drawn to God. When one seeks God diligently, one finds God. So those seekers provide both personal and general experience that may be valid for many.

This compendium is meant to be general. I will state its personal content here and now. I will follow a personal three legged stool in discerning my guidance: 1) the bible as a whole, 2) the Magisterium of my church, the Catholic Church, and 3) the tradition of the early Church immediately after Jesus walked the earth. I find that stool very helpful and very comforting.

My hope is that whether your religion is the same as mine or if your religion is different from mine, you will still learn from my experience on how to discern. In that way this compendium is general. For example, I will follow my conscience from all that I know about who God is. Though second, my conscience is supreme. By that I mean that nothing will stop me from loving all before me. I will decide matters on the basis of all of the good that is right there in front of me, as opposed to some principle.

I will answer to You, God, for all eternity. My love for you is undying.

A purity exists in each strain of religion. That purity is God's will for us as found in our respective religions. God's grace leads the way.

Let God renew the earth as only God's graces can. Let every man say yes to God within their own respective religions. Let there be two camps on earth, those who freely choose to come to God and those who do not yet freely choose to come to God. May all be evangelized thru personal witness in a seminar –"Where Work Meets Faith." Let whole lives give testimony to truth. Let Loquate's undertaking abound.

Loquate is not a religion. Nor does Loquate seek to be a religion. But thru Loquate you can catch a glimpse of depth of faith. The depth of faith seen at Loquate.Tv is not theoretical. It is experiential. You get depth of faith by practicing your religion. At Loquate.Tv we are sharing our stories and building our community.

It seems like any who open the Sacred Door experience difficulty of discernment. For example, my hope is that if those with experience could be found who have gone thru what I was going thru, then a checklist of principles of discernment could be invaluable to any for whom this does occur. Like a pilot who uses a preflight checklist based on experience of trial and error, this document may be used as a God guidance ("Guidance") check list.

Shortly after I began writing The Sacred Door, I met with a person who had a change of heart. He told me that the reason for the change of heart was Guidance. I thought about what he told me. The next day I replied back to him as follows.

First Comes Love

In all of Guidance, there is no mission, no calling, and no work more important than loving all those around you. The whole point of Guidance is to love more. To love one another trumps everything else. So to discern your Guidance, true Guidance can never go against love. If your Guidance ever tells you to do something that goes against love, consider it false Guidance. So love comes first.

Have Faith in All Those Around You

God's favorite way to guide us is thru others. I need to hear them. I am inspired by those around me who act in faith.

Next I said to my friend "Have faith in all those around you." To have faith in another means to have faith in another's good common sense to come to God. When you put your faith in another, they are drawn to you. It can be no other way, because they see God in you. Your faith in them draws them to you, to your heart.

We are to hear God's will for us on the lips of all those around us, especially about ways that may hurt or harm others. These we are to leave behind. We are to hear God's will for us on the lips of all those around us, especially about ways that may hurt or harm others. These we are to leave behind.

Keep Everything in Balance

Next I said to my friend "Keep everything in balance." For example, you want to keep up all of your relationships. You want to stay in relationship with your wife, with your children, with those projects that you have been a part of; even in projects you are leaving you want to provide a smooth transition. You always want to be charitable to others. You want to seek to provide those things that they ask for, that is within your power to provide to them, and that will be helpful to them.

On Experience

If something worked for me in discerning Guidance I share my learning with you. I also learn from others with experience on Guidance.

Do Not Act Alone on Guidance whenever you are troubled or concerned

Do not act alone on Guidance of concern without talking to another. Get the advice of a trusted friend, or spiritual director from your religion. See if you can find God's goodness in the Guidance.

To find God's will for us we must acquiesce to God.

In the end we must acquiesce to God. God is nothing but good. We all must be obedient and faithful to the treasure of God at work within us.

Fruits

The whole issue of Guidance is one of discernment. We can know a tree by its fruits. Every action has a consequence. Nothing but good comes from God. Nothing but evil comes from Satan. So in time, you can see the fruits of your actions following Guidance. By the fruits, you shall know the source.

Another Set of Information

It helps me to think of Guidance like this. Guidance is just another set of information to be discerned. This is no different than reading a book, hearing a lesson, or learning on the job, in that I must choose. I must decide how I am to behave.

Once I have decided I need resolution to continue my journey. You cannot know God without coming to God. God respects our free will. He only comes to us if we are open to Him. Therefore if we are to grow in relationship with God, there are times when we must be present to God in order to hear God. We need to create silence in prayer to hear God. If today you hear His voice, harden not your heart.

The problem is this. We have two feet. We have one foot in this world and the other foot in the next world. To live in this world, if good can come from Guidance I follow it. For example, I have piercing eyes. Thru Guidance I was guided to tell others my worst sin before telling the other a fault I saw in them. I held that good could come from telling my worst sin before telling another a fault I saw in them. I chose to follow that Guidance. That led to humility.

Humility is a realization of a need to change myself first. Humility makes it easier for another to hear me.

That also led to my seeing fewer faults in others. My eyes were piercing myself with mercy.

Good did come from this strange Guidance. God will use Guidance to not only love others but also to cure our faults if we let Him.

On Humility

“To be humble is to be truthful before God, for what is humility but a recognition of ourselves as totally dependent on Him¹?”

“The reason God is such a great lover of humility is that He is a great lover of truth. Humility is, in fact, truth, while pride is nothing but lying.²”

¹ Cajetan Mary da Bergamo

God's Will for Us

It is true that God will not be put in a box. We are never to make the mistake of ages past, putting our self will ahead of God's will. We are not to commit the religious lie. The religious lie is doing evil in the name of good. Self will is not putting God first. Self will is putting our will, our false self will, first.

Our true self longs to come to God. God is nothing but good. In extreme cases it may be worthwhile to contemplate our main spiritual journey of good deeds and good choices over time which brought us to where we are today. A coalescence of the will of God with our will occurs as we contemplate. Our spiritual journey gives testimony to the consolations of God. Our heavy heart gives way to joy. God will not leave us orphans. The good outweighs the bad and I learn from my mistakes.

Heavy Heart vs. Peace, Joy and Consolation

I once had a spiritual advisor who told me that when I had a heavy heart, to be wary that Satan may be present. With a heavy heart, Satan tries to make us despair. Satan is not happy unless we leave all of our Guidance behind, not just a part of it, but all of it. So, most temptation is a temptation to leave behind everything. Satan does this to discourage us from continuing.

The antidote to the heavy heart is a prayer of thanksgiving. God is my Father. I am God's loving child on His lap. The spiritual advisor who told me about the heavy heart said that God brings peace, consolation, and joy to our heart.

One time I shared with a spiritual advisor that my guidance could contain false guidance and that upon discovery I would eliminate it from my writings. He seemed shocked. I explained that I am not to know Satan. I am to know God. I did not have a heavy heart. The spiritual advisor who was concerned advised me to go before the Blessed Sacrament in Eucharistic Adoration and discern a matter. The matter was that my writings could contain false Guidance. I went before the Blessed Sacrament. I was interiorly guided again before the Blessed Sacrament that my writings could contain pepper, false guidance, mixed in with salt, true guidance. I pointed out to my spiritual advisor that I had to discern everything very carefully. God gives me free will to know and understand Him, but it is my journey.

I patiently pick out the pepper, whenever I find it. I will forever be coming to God. No man is any different. We all must look at everything very carefully. We must discern the good from the bad. It is tempting to think that if God talks to us, we must be perfect. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As a way of discerning Guidance in a quick foundation, another spiritual advisor said to me to ask myself: "Who am I putting on top, God or myself?" Putting myself on top is like a foundation of quicksand. I can sink very quickly. Putting God on top is like a foundation of bedrock. Bedrock is safer ground.

² Vincent DePaul

Another friend suggested: “If you had to advise a loved one on the subject you are facing, how would you advise them?” Then advise yourself the same way you would advise the loved one.

A priest in confession once said to me “You are going from one spiritual level to another and are very vulnerable now.” I never saw myself as a saint, but I asked if any of the saints went through this. He said “Yes. All of them.” I asked what saint he could recommend to me. He said “St. Teresa of Avila.” I read her works. She described how to better discern if guidance is coming from God, Satan or our self. The descriptions were very helpful to me. It was a consolation that much of the confusion that she initially went thru, I was going thru as well.

The question is “Who will stand in solidarity with us as we do this?” St. Teresa of Avila said that one who is experienced in mystical experiences is more helpful to another with a mystical experience than one who has not been led along the same path. In this sense, I share my experiences for any who may be interested in adding to this compendium and being a part of a peer review.

I told the priest in confession of my troubles in discerning Guidance. He seemed to have an understanding of where in my life I was at the time. I asked if I could see him again. He said I could but I did not need to. He recommended a book by Adrian Van Kaam that he had studied in the Seminary. That book is called The Dynamics of Spiritual Self Direction.

In the book a passage said this that was very consoling to me:

“Another in authority may impose directives on you that are at odds with what you are deep down.

- a. Trust in your own spiritual inner direction.
- b. Believe in the reliability of your teacher or director, spouse or friend in whom you can have faith.
- c. Seek one you can encounter in relaxed faith, hope, and love.

The spiritual life develops in and through the whole human life of a person. Growth is a story of grace and a story of human development.

- a. My life moves along dead end streets, once I have lost my spiritual direction.
- b. Often such false directives are shared by many who come from the same symbolic universe of goals and values that are promoted within a shared cultural environment.”

To those points I would add, join a small faith group of committed persons putting God first in all that you do, a permanent group if you will, that knows you well, and you them, that you trust because of their sincerity, in sharing their concerns about their handling of something.

My main spiritual advisor said to me: “If life is scary, we tend to not trust God enough. What makes us afraid is, not knowing what God has in mind for us, suffering, or happiness. Give God complete control. He is teaching us. We have to trust Him. Lack of trust is not worthy of God.

He said: 'Ask and you shall receive.' God is looking for an act of faith. God tests our faith every so often."

A Tool

After we invite the Lord in, then we will be tempted to set aside God's call for us by temptations of the world's plan for us. This happens moment by moment. The tool to accept our cross is to think of the worst that can happen to us, and accept even that if that is God's will for us, then if we pray for our acceptance of our cross, again and again as often as we are tempted to reject our cross, then we will stay in God's bosom and by grace our cross will become light. We will know we have succeeded by the joy we experience. We can try this and experience joy.

Our Cross

By cross I mean that which we would not choose for our self but which in hindsight was good for our self. No person who walks this earth is without a cross. As many times as there are weaves in a shirt is the number of times we may face our cross in this life.

The cross is nothing but good. I will strip myself clean in my cross.

By our actions suffering for another, we draw the other to us. When the Lord is the center of our actions, the focus of our attention, He will hold us up. Nothing can turn us back. Nothing can keep us from doing what He wants of us.

In short, He graces our action because we love. We love Him. We may love even a so called adversary thru non violence, non cooperation. We love all connected with the action that we are called on to perform. We put ourselves totally in His hands. He will protect us.

Faith

Faith is the greatest gift God can give to us. We can learn on the job of life to have faith. We build our faith by loving each other. Growth in faith is the greatest gift we can give to God.

Poverty of Spirit

Poverty of Spirit for me means to have total trust in God, like a little child. Poverty of spirit is different from the heavy heart. There are different kinds of poverty of spirit. All are self emptying. In some kinds of poverty of spirit we can feel like nothing we do is worthwhile and have utter dependence on God.

God alone can use that kind of poverty of spirit. When we feel we can do nothing, we are far from self will. God may grant us that kind of poverty of spirit just before God uses us in a significant way to touch others. This is a consolation for us to realize it is not us, but God who is at work. We may feel a cleansing, and may cry interior tears of joy if we are so used. It is a gift that we might know we are not alone. God is behind all good.

Stay the Course

Whenever Satan attacks me very strongly, I may know that something very important may need to be done. When Satan is desperate, my actions and discernment are all the more important. If I give up, I will no longer love all before me. So it is because of charity towards others that I must persevere. I try to use my mind always to discern a right path. Then I act in faith. Actions in faith are affirmations of knowledge of God. Stay the course; finish the work.

Never doubt - Pray

Never doubt. Prayer settles everything down. A good way to start prayer is in gratitude. By praying, you put yourself in God's presence. Prayer is a most basic form of worship. All prayer is good. If God wants to speak to you, interiorly you will hear God's voice.

It may be dangerous to ask God to speak, for Satan may speak instead. We are not to tempt God. It is not our will but God's will that we seek. It may be presumptuous to ask God to speak or to respond in Guidance to our prayer request. God knows best, not us.

God knows what we need. If we ask for a loaf of bread, will God give us a stick? Every prayer is answered, but in a way we may not immediately know or understand.

Stay with prayer. God wants your perseverance in prayer. Satan wants you to give up prayer. Satan will tempt any who seek to persevere in prayer. God will reward any who persevere in prayer. St Teresa of Avila said she wished she had persevered more in prayer during one period in her early prayer life. She was a contemplative. Contemplatives pray a lot. She felt a need to pray more. That is how much she valued prayer.

God will personally guide any who seek God in great perseverance of prayer. We may be talking years here, not days. Look at prayer without consolation, like this. Whenever we pray, we are building our faith. Prayer is an act of faith in God. It takes courage to persevere in prayer. The key is to not grasp at being equal to God but rather to seek to love all before us in adoration of God.

My main spiritual advisor said: "Pride refuses to accept our human condition. The opposite of pride is adoration. Adoration means this: God is a loving parent. I am an adoring child. Prayer in gratitude is adoration."

Thomas Keating speaks of contemplative prayer. On page 147 in his book "Intimacy With God," he says:

"Faith purified from attachment to any concept and love purified from attachment to consolation, even the most spiritual, knows God in the immediacy of divine union. Contemplative prayer is the best apprenticeship for divine union. It is the exercise of pure faith, trust, and love, proved by waiting for God without giving up or going away. It is letting go of the false self, the 'old man' in Paul's terms, and the building of the 'new man' – and the 'new woman' – under the motivating power of the indwelling Spirit."

Avoid Attachment To Concepts

I was not aware that concepts are boxes until I was interiorly guided. I thought about it. Our concepts can keep us from seeing truth. There is no box that is one size that fits all. Concepts are evil when they keep us from seeing the truth. God will not be put in a box. I found that it was a lot safer to judge matters on the basis of all the good that is right there in front of me, than to judge matters on the basis of concepts. Concepts can keep me from seeing good that needs to be done.

Concepts are denied their power thru paradoxes. For example a paradox of the sword may be found in Matthew 10:34 when Christ said: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword,” indicating our choices in coming to God will be like a sword piercing our heart, and yet in Matthew 26:52 Christ said: “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.” This occurred just before Christ freely gave himself up to those with swords drawn who arrested him.

Did you ever notice paradoxes in sacred scripture? Paradoxical behavior usually is a source of abundance. The paradox is proof that concepts are evil, for if a concept is followed in every instance, then at times of paradox, wrong may be done. Rather, seek good always. Seek God always. His will is nothing but good.

Avoid “either/or thinking.” If either path A or path B may be chosen, “either/or” thinking wrongly says that if path A is chosen, then something is wrong with path B. A mom gave her son two ties, one black, and the other white. When the son put on the black tie, the mother asked: “What is wrong with the white tie?” Do not fall into the trap of “either/or” thinking making one principle valid in every circumstance. Rather judge matters on the basis of all the good that is right there in front of you.

Keep Thinking

God may use a mysterious way of aiding you in discernment, like my expressing my worst sin before telling another of their fault. That way may work until that way works no more. Then after a time God may give you another mysterious way, but different, in my case being more gentle. This is so you keep thinking.

We are rational human beings. God wants us to come to him as adults, freely choosing, and fully comprehending what we choose. Then because we have chosen God, we become like a little child in a freedom that only God can bring. God always wants us to discern, and to act in faith.

Our actions in faith are God’s will for us, and not necessarily our Guidance. That does not make our guidance wrong, but merely a stepping stone, like crossing a river in a fog. Thus we can walk down a path initiated by Guidance to step on a stone, then to find another stone in the fog, until we have crossed the river but not necessarily at the place we originally set out.

Try Our Hardest, Then Trust in God

When we have tried our hardest, and turn to God, God will do the rest. All of our actions in faith will be blessed. We are always to trust in God. Gather the evidence. God has been good to us thus far in our life. He will continue to be good to us.

Make a Place for Pain in Your Heart

It is not easy to follow Guidance. Making a place for pain in our heart helps. We are to follow our Guidance in spite of pain we may feel. Our false self is burning away in our cross on our journey to our new self.

On Obedience

If we are not obedient how can we come to God? By being obedient we prepare ourselves to share in a gift of heaven. In heaven everyone freely chooses and follows God's will. Free will comes first. Who, but those being obedient to God, may be in heaven? If those who were not obedient to God, hurting and harming others, were in heaven it would be unfair to those who were obedient to God, loving others.

The advantage of searching for truth within one's own church is hearing a considered opinion from those who have gone before us, and who are now with us as part of our church's tradition. The considered opinion of those in authority on topics new to us can be most helpful. For tradition may lead to proven ways of goodness.

Satan

False Guidance leads us away from God. I am not to follow false Guidance. I am not to know Satan. I am to have great disdain for Satan. God is more powerful than Satan. I am to pick the pepper out of my salt. I can seek to send Satan away in the name of my God. At times God allows Satan to come to us that we might know our own mind. When we go down a wrong path, God allows Satan that we might decide again if we wish to go down the false path even further. Thru knowledge and free will we can decide to turn around.

A thought may come from Satan, our self, or God. Just because we have a thought does not mean that the thought came from our self. Satan is wrapped in chains. When Satan comes to us it is that we might know our self, and choose God not Satan's temptation. God is more powerful than Satan. So false Guidance discovered can lead to goodness.

Satan's Main Tools

Satan's main tools are hatred and self will. Self-will can take us away from God's will. God's will brings peace. Hatred can take us away from peace. Forgiveness restores peace. We must be kind to ourselves. We must be as kind to ourselves as we are to others. We must forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

On God's Plan For Us

God has a plan for us to prosper us and not to harm us. Our fears are like a tiger inside of us waiting to consume us, but the tiger is a big, scared cat. For when we face our fears, the tiger dissolves into nothingness.

There is no need to be afraid.

Fear

“In love, there can be no fear. No one can hurt you if you are determined to do only what is right; if you have to suffer for being good, you will count it a blessing. There is no need to be afraid.³”

“Love will come to perfection in us when we can face the day of judgment without fear; because even in this world we have become as God is.”

“In love, there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love; because to fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love⁴.”

The Kingdom Of God

“All we can know is what we, who compose humanity, must do, and what not, in order that the Kingdom of God may come. That we all know.

“And everyone need but begin to do what we must do, and stop doing what we must not do; every one of us need only live by all that light which is within us, in order that the promised Kingdom of God, toward which the heart of every man is drawn, may come at once.⁵”

Wisdom

To become wise we must give up everything for perception. We are not to trust our own perception but we are to trust God’s will. God is nothing but good. God is righteous, just and holy. A friend said to me: “Our God is a God who wants to be known.” Sacred scripture taken as a whole is how God makes himself known to us.

Beliefs

God comes to us as we perceive Him. He does not come to us in ways we do not know or understand. Our perception of God may change over time. It has been said that one’s perception of their earthly father may be an initial perception of their heavenly Father. But as we get to know God, our perception of God may change.

³ 1 Peter 3:13-14

⁴ John 4:17-18

⁵ Tolstoy- The Kingdom of God is Within You - page 285

Knowing God is often an interactive process. Thru interaction we make one little change at a time. It is less likely, but one may experience God in a profound new way as a result of a mystical experience. The difference between an iteration of one little change at a time and the mystical experience is that the mystical experience is a transcendent experience. The mystical experience may move us from our last iteration to a giant leap forward made just for you personally. Only God knows what is best for you. Through relating your mystical experience you may help others in a similar place.

Keep praying. As our belief changes, so too may our heart change. Prayer is the great cleansing.

Sense of Community

Guidance that cannot be fulfilled except thru untoward actions against others is to be avoided without specific Guidance to the contrary. Get the help of another trusted person to discern specific Guidance to the contrary.

Sense of community is a great leveler. Loquate defines sense of community as an environment characterized by togetherness and sharing as opposed to cool detachment. The leaders in the environment know the members and go out of their way to be helpful. Though the members are quite diverse, personal diversity is celebrated for its contribution. There is a sense of group loyalty and group support. The atmosphere is cohesive. The environment is a community.

Think twice before doing anything that goes against sense of community. Speak the truth always, but always toward an end of sense of community, if possible. Love first.

Truth

God would have us always be open to the truth, the truth that we might be wrong. He wants us to change to ways that do not hurt or harm others. We will never be finished with this task. Still that is our mission. God is merciful. God will give us the grace to see and to change, especially in community. In the mean time, we must accept the discomfort of seeing ourselves as displeasing to ourselves⁶.

Purification

In a natural order of things, sense of community ranks high. Perhaps my greatest learning experience on discernment is that by washing our supernatural affairs with sense of community, much good may occur and many evils may be avoided. For if God loves one man, God loves all mankind. God's love for me is abundant. His love for you can be no less abundant. God is pleased when I stay in community. I wish not only to stay in community, but also to build community...to bring peace on earth.

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⁶ Mother Therese