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The Flame

September/October 2025

Discerning Spirits with A Listening Heart:

Naturally or Supernaturally Knowing Good from Evil.

By Megan Kruger

"Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil." (1 Kgs 3:9a).

When I was in high school, a friend of mine used to talk about "common sense"—the idea that you should use your perception of a situation or facts in order to make a sound judgment. King Solomon expressed "common sense" as a need to discern good from evil (1 Kgs 3:9a).

The ability to know good from evil is called discernment. To some extent, each person has this ability. God provided early believers with the Ten Commandments to navigate and discern rightly. Christians receive further revelation in knowing Jesus, Scripture and their Christian faith. Many make use of St. Ignatius of Loyola's "Rules of Discernment." These rules and tenets are genuinely helpful and provide a foundation to natural discernment, but they only go so far.

King Solomon is famous for his God-given gift of discernment. What made King Solomon stand out from the rest? He had a heightened sense of good and evil. His discernment was supernatural because God revealed good and evil to Solomon. The Lord was so pleased with Solomon's request to distinguish right from wrong that He gave him "a heart so wise and understanding that there has never been anyone like him" (1 Kgs 3:12). He was granted a supernatural gift of wisdom and discernment that was beyond human understanding.

The charism of discernment of spirits can only be revealed to a person by God. It is not an educated guess. Those who have this charism rely on the Lord's strength and revelation. The charism of discerning spirits, or "distinguishing" spirits, is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit described in 1 Corinthians 12:10. Discernment of spirits acknowledges there is more than one kind of spirit. The three primary spirits operating include the **Holy Spirit** (good spirit), the antichrist (**evil spirit**), and the **human spirit.**

The **Holy Spirit** desires to make us holy, and seeks to help us turn toward God. When the Holy Spirit works, the soul becomes inflamed with love of God. The fruit is an increase in virtue such as an interior joy or an increase in faith, hope and love. The Holy Spirit gives us strength and leads us toward the Truth.

The **evil spirit(s)** seek to tempt us and to get us to sin. The primary objective of evil is to turn us away from God. The enemy will agitate us, make us sad or anxious, keep our sins and struggles hidden, weaken our will and capitalize on personal struggles. He attacks us when we are weak. He will capitalize on our fears and doubts. Evil spirits do not discriminate—they do not care if you are old or young, healthy or ill. Evil spirits try to keep us from going to church, discourage our prayer life and provoke us to choose sin and vice.

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Dear Readers of The Flame,

On the night before he died, Jesus gave his followers some parting gifts: *his Body and Blood (Mark 14:22-25), his example of washing feet (John 13:1-17), the new commandment to imitate his love (John 13:34-35), his parting teachings on the Holy Spirit (John 14:16 and others) and his prayer for unity (John 17:20-26).*

Among Jesus' parting gifts was peace. Jesus said:

> *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid…I have told you all this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.* (John 14:27 and 16:33)

What a great gift! This is the longing of each human heart and the desire for the world. Yet this gift of peace seems so elusive-at times for individuals and certainly for the world. How can this gift of peace, this fruit of the Holy Spirit, grow in us?

First, we need to remember: the gift of Christ's peace is not based on circumstances. Occasionally, our circumstances can produce a fragile peace. When everything in our work, home, social and personal aspects of life are trouble free, we have peace. Those days are rare. In fact, Jesus promised otherwise. Again, he said, "in the world, you will have trouble." Though we live in the world, we are not of the world. We can carry the peace of Christ with us, amid the troubles of this world.

Secondly, we need to pray. St. Paul said:

> *Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:6-7)

Prayer connects us to the Ruler of the universe who is the source of peace. When things seem to be unraveling on earth or in our personal lives, God is not panicking. By our grateful prayer we petition the One who is all good, all powerful and all wise. His peace in Jesus will then guard our hearts and minds.

Finally, we need to do our part in guarding our hearts and minds from anxiety. Again, St. Paul immediately after the above promise on prayer teaches:

> *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* (Philippians 4:8)

St. Paul understood the human person very well. He knew that our feelings follow our thoughts. If our thoughts are occupied with things that are true, honorable, just, pure et cetera, then our hearts will be less apt to be troubled. Christ's peace will find a home in us.

Isaiah 26:3 from the Revised Standard Version reads,

> Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee.

This is the challenge! Our minds find it easy to stray from the Lord than to stay on the Lord. How can we cooperate with the Spirit to bear the fruit of peace?

Most of us have a lot of "weeding" to do in the garden of our hearts. We have developed thought patterns, based on our experiences, that are rooted in fear and mistrust. We compound matters by feeding our souls with impactful media content that makes us feel frustrated, powerless and even angry. To move from a mind that strays from the Lord to one that stays with the Lord we need to deal with both of these things.

We need to prayerfully weed our hearts. Our propensity to fall into negative thinking is to become the opportunity for us to draw close to the Lord in prayer. By dialoging with the Lord about our fears, judgmental thoughts and anger he can begin to bring us healing and peace.

We also need to limit our intake of news media. I am not recommending burying our heads in the sand. Our knowledge of the problems in our world, nation and community summons us to intercessory prayer. Some of us may even be called into the heat of these battles to bring Christ's light, love and truth to bear on these issues. However, if we find ourselves being dragged down by the world's problems or distracted by the world's values, we may be overconsuming this world's information.

Again, St. Paul gives us beautiful words that root us in the peace of Christ:

> *And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* (Colossians 3:15-17)

Though Jesus gives us his gift of peace, it is a peace that grows in us through intentional decisions. By praying to our heavenly Father-all powerful, good and wise-and by embracing the fact that we live in a troubled world, we will grow the fruit of peace. We will become more like Christ and better able to witness to His abiding presence in a world that so needs his peace.

In Christ,
Fr. Bob Franco

PS: Please check out our fall healing Masses and other programing!

Catholic Renewal Ministries Traveling Healing Mass

Friday, September 19th 2025

St. Francis of Assisi Parish

Fr. Chris Stein, Celebrant

St. Francis of Assisi Parish
6850 Mayfield Rd.
Gates Mills, OH 44040

Friday, October 24th 2025

St. Columbkille Parish

Fr. Jacob Bearer, Celebrant

St. Columbkille Parish
6740 Broadview Rd.
Parma, OH 44134

Both Masses: Praise & worship begins at 7:00 Liturgy begins at 7:30 p.m.

All are Welcome!

Healing prayer teams will be available after both Masses for individual prayer, and there will also be a social after the October 24th Mass.

Come, Sing and Praise God with Joy!

Contact CRM: 440-944-9445

Healing Prayer teams will be available after Mass for individual prayer.

crmweb.org

OUR LADY OF ANGELS PRAYER GROUP PRESENTS:

Life in the Spirit Seminar

WHERE:

Our Lady of Angels
School, Primary Building
(behind Linus Hall) – handicapped accessible

3644 Rocky River Dr., Cleveland, OH 44111
there will be signs!

WHEN:

Eight consecutive Tuesday evenings,
beginning September 9th
through October 28, 2025
7:30 – 9:00pm
(refreshments will follow)

CONTACT:

For more information and
to register please phone
Verna at 216-251-3560
or Tom at 216-536-6495
(There is NO charge for this seminar.)

PRESENTATION:

A **Life in the Spirit Seminar** is an opportunity to renew and ignite the power of the Holy Spirit in your own life. It is an invitation to make or re-establish a deep personal commitment to Jesus in openness to the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

We are a Charismatic Prayer Group which means we use all the gifts of the Holy Spirit already given in Baptism and Confirmation. Each evening of the seminar we hear a presentation and then break into small groups to share both what we've heard in the talk presented and how God is working in our lives. It is a lively exchange of the beauty of Life in God's Spirit.

We all long for a closer walk with our Lord and this seminar may be just what you are looking for. When the seminar finishes, we continue to meet weekly on Tuesday evenings to support each other in this new life with God.

Everyone is most welcome!

Romans 12:2
"Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect."

Acts 2: 39
"The promise of the Holy Spirit is made to you and your children and to all those far off whomever the Lord our God will call."

Prayer Group Information

SS. Cosmas and Damian Charismatic Prayer Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the church gathering area under the Holy Spirit Dove. Come and experience vibrant praise and worship, intercessory and healing prayer, and scripture sharing. To contact us, or be on the prayer group email list, call 330-310-2595 or email dennycarleton@sbcglobal.net. We play music highlights, prophecies, and teachings from the prayer group on https://arkandoasis.net/.

The **Community of Praise Prayer Group** meets at St. Paul Catholic Church, 241 South Main St., North Canton, OH 44720. Their prayer meetings start at **6:30 pm on the second Monday of each month**. The up-coming meetings will be on September 8, October 13, November 10, December 8 and January 12, 2026. They meet inside the main church in the area of the "old Sanctuary". Parking is behind the Church, and there is an elevator to the upper level where the Main Church is located. For more information contact Don and Rosemary Pfiffner at 330-499-9371 or email: pfiffner67@gmail.com.

The Living Word Healing Prayer Ministry at St. Ambrose Parish in Brunswick meets face to face on the **first and third Tuesdays of every month from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.** in our Chapel.

We allow the Winds of the Spirit to flow over us as we praise the Lord through music, sharing, and group reflection. We allow time for God to open our hearts and minds as we listen to His Word both through Scripture and Word of Knowledge. Every meeting ends with healing prayer as we ask Jesus to come to us in a special way to heal our brokenness and touch us with His Love. All are invited to join us as we praise and worship the Living God!

Our Lady of Angels Prayer Group. Everyone is invited to join us for our **annual Life in the Spirit Seminar.** Come to ignite a new relationship with Jesus, our Savior, or to increase and renew your love for Him. We begin September 9th for 8 consecutive Tuesday evenings through October 28th, 2025, from 7:30 pm until 9:00 pm with refreshments and fellowship to follow each evening. We meet in the Primary Bldg of Our Lady of Angels school (behind Linus Hall and handicapped accessible) –3644 Rocky River Dr., Cleveland, OH 44111 – there will be signs! There is NO charge for this seminar. Phone Verna at 216.251.3560 or Tom 216.536.6495 for more information and to register for the seminar.

Throughout the year, we meet every Tuesday evening 7:30-9:00 pm to Praise our Lord, move in the Gifts of the Spirit, hear a teaching or sharing and pray for each other's intentions. We enjoy refreshments after our meetings. There is always a healing team available for personal prayer. Phone Tom Stamper for more information – 216-536-6495.

The **Bukas Loob sa Diyos** (BLD) or in English - **Open in Spirit to God** (OSG), is a Filipino Catholic Charismatic Covenant Community. While the majority of BLD members are from the Philippines, it also includes other brothers and sisters of many nationalities and heritage backgrounds. We meet every **Thursday, at 7:00 pm** at the Mary Queen of Peace Chapel, 4423 Pearl Rd, Cleveland, OH 44109. We hold weekly praise and worship service in-person. Also, on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m., we celebrate a mass followed by a healing service.

We are a communion of families and a community of persons called together as one people through the moment of encounter and a process of renewal to a relationship of faith, hope, and love with God. We conduct marriage encounter programs, solo person encounters, single encounters, family encounters and life in the spirit seminars. For more information, please contact Rudy and Fe Fontilla at (440) 403-5719 or email: rudyfefontilla1975@yahoo.com.

The Families in Christ Jesus small household-based groups meet in private homes on Thursday evenings (contact Susan Federico for details /cell 216-312-3978 /smfederico78@gmail.com). All of the households meet together on the **first Thursday of the month** at St. John of the Cross Church at 7:45 pm. Below is the schedule for the first Thursday of the month gatherings for September through December. All are welcome!

September 4 speaker: *TBD*

October 2 speaker: *Father David Woost, pastor, Divine Word*

November 6: *Ministry Night with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, prayer teams available*

December 5: *Annual Christmas Dinner Dance*

The ICC Prayer Ministry meets on the 1st and 3rd Saturday Mornings from 10:00am – Noon in the Parish Center Bldg., Goebel Hall, (behind Immaculate Conception Church, 2846 Lake Street, Madison, Ohio 44057). The meetings are open to Catholic Church members in the area. Mary Cusack of Holy Family Church in Stow, OH, has agreed to teach this Saturday program. These meetings will contain praise, worship, light refreshments, healing, prophecies, scriptures and other prayer teachings.

For your information, Immaculate Conception Church has been chosen to be one of the sacred shrine sites during the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope. The faithful may want to take this time to visit, pray and receive the special graces associated with the Jubilee Year. A Jubilee cross is displayed in the Sanctuary.

The **Holy Spirit Prayer Group** of St. Mary Church in Hudson is a Charismatic Holy Spirt led prayer group that meets the first and third Saturdays of each month year around. We meet **from 10am to 11:30 am** in the Chapel. The main focus of our meeting is to praise and worship the living God. We not only offer praise and worship but also periods of silent prayer to seek and hear God's words and His messages to us. We share words of God, share stories, and offer intercessory prayers for hurting and suffering brothers and sisters.

Our prayer group offers a Healing Prayer Service also on the 1st Sunday of each month from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm. For further information, please contact us at HealingPrayers@stmaryhudson.cc or call Robert Rodriguez at 440-804-6358.

WANTED - GENERAL SERVICE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Catholic Renewal Ministries is looking for a few new members for the General Service Committee.

We meet once a month, usually the third Monday of the month, to discuss plans and events for the Renewal. Members are encouraged to provide ideas for the growth of the Renewal in the Cleveland Diocese, and to provide help as needed. Current committees are: Conference, Prayer Groups, Healing, Hispanic, Program, Music and Word Gifts.

If you are interested or have questions, please contact Ken Posavad at 440.319.9646 or kposa@sbcglobal.net

CRM and Prayer Group Events

FIRST SUNDAYS

The Holy Spirit Prayer Group of St. Mary Church hosts an in-person **Healing Prayer Service** on the **first Sunday** of each month. The service will be held in the chapel from **12:30-1:30 pm.** We encourage you to submit your prayer requests to healingprayers@stmaryhudson.cc. St. Mary Church is located at 340 N. Main St., Hudson 44236, Tel: 330-653-8118.

Our prayer teams will be available to pray for the healings of your body and spirit. Fr. Larry will, depending on his availability, offer an anointing for those seriously ill, preparing for surgery, or weak with aging.

SECOND WEEKEND OF THE MONTH

Holy Family Healing Prayer Group (Stow) offers **Healing Prayer** after all masses the second weekend of the month **(Saturday 5:00 PM, Sunday 7:30, 9:00 and 11:30 AM masses)** and after **Tuesday and Friday 8:00 AM daily masses**. Prayer teams will meet you in the back of the church. If you are unable to attend one of the masses, we offer homebound private prayer. Private prayer for physical, inner healing and Unbound can be scheduled by calling 330-686-0017. Jesus is Alive! Come experience His healing power.

TUESDAYS & FRIDAYS

See **Holy Family Healing Prayer Group (Stow)** under SECOND WEEKEND OF THE MONTH.

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 19TH

Catholic Renewal Ministries' Traveling Healing Mass for September will be held at **St. Francis of Assisi Parish** on Friday, September 19th, 7:00 pm. Fr. Chris Stein will be the celebrant. Praise and worship will begin at 7:00, and the liturgy will start at 7:30. Healing prayer teams will be available after Mass for individual prayer. The church is located at 6850 Mayfield Rd., in Gates Mills, OH 44040. For more information, please contact CRM at 440-944-9445. All are Welcome. Come, Sing and Praise God with Joy!

FRIDAY OCTOBER 24TH

Catholic Renewal Ministries' Traveling Healing Mass for October will be held at **St. Columbkille Parish** on Friday, October 24th, 7:00 pm. Fr. Jacob Bearer will be the celebrant. Praise and worship will begin at 7:00, and the liturgy will start at 7:30. Healing prayer teams will be available after Mass for individual prayer and there will also be a social after Mass. The Church is located at 6740 Broadview Rd. in Parma 44134. For more information, please contact CRM at 440-944-9445. All are Welcome. Come, Sing and Praise God with Joy!

THIRD SATURDAYS

The **Living Word Healing Prayer Ministry** at St. Ambrose Parish in Brunswick offers a monthly **Healing Prayer** event which takes place in the Church **after the 4:30 p.m. Mass** on the **third Saturday** of every month. Healing prayer ministers are available to offer prayer for spiritual, emotional, or physical healing. Please join us so that the Spirit of God can touch you with healing love!

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 13TH

Experience God's Healing Power! **A Healing Mass will be celebrated on Saturday, September 13th at Holy Family Church**, 3179 Kent Rd, Stow. There will be a number of priests available to hear Confessions at 8:00 a.m., and there will be a time of Praise and Worship starting at 8:30. Mass and Anointing will begin at 9:00, followed by prayer teams providing individual prayer. For more information, please contact Mary Cusack, 330-687-8843.

MAGNIFICAT OF STARK COUNTY, invites all women to a Breakfast at 9:00am on Saturday, September 13, at the Holiday Inn Canton, 4520 Everhard Road NW, Canton. Doors open at 8:30am.

Our guest speaker, Connie Lenneman, is a parishioner of St. Paul's North Canton and the mother of four children. She is a New Orleans native from a large Catholic family who has endured the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, her father's imprisonment and release, and her own divorce. She felt a calling to pastoral counseling and opened Way Maker Christian Counseling in North Canton, Ohio. Please join us as Connie shares about how she navigated through the turmoil in her life with faith and reliance upon God to reveal each next right step.

Cost: $25 Mail-in/$26 Online. For more information about our speaker and to make your reservation visit magnificatstark.weebly.com or call Sally Kohring at 330-484-1623. Reservation deadline is September 7th.

(Continued from page 1)

Humans are neither angelic nor divine. Therefore, the **human spirit** is unique and distinct from the other two mentioned, which manifest as good or evil. The human spirit often gets overlooked in discernment of spirits, both naturally and supernaturally. For instance, a human spirit can sometimes attribute a spiritual cause to something natural. Let's say you forget to lock the barnyard gate and consequently your cow gets out while you are at Mass. When you realize the cow is gone, you say, "It's spiritual warfare—the evil one wanted to take my cow while I was at church!" This is likely a false conclusion because it was human error that caused the cow to get out.

Distinguishing which spirit is operating requires discernment.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits…every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist" (1 Jn 4:1-3).

Some people have a special anointing in discernment of spirits and use their gift for inner healing or deliverance ministries. Experience, humility, accountability, and accuracy may further lead to a greater understanding of the charism, although it is God who will confirm and show a person the supernatural. As with other revealed gifts (words of knowledge and wisdom), each grows according to God's measure.

Megan Kruger, MA, spends her time as a certified spiritual director, guiding people through Ignatian Retreats and inner healing prayer. She has served on the Board for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. This article originally appeared in Pentecost Today 2024 Issue 1 and can be found under resources at www.pentecosttodayusa.org.

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