

In all our lives, but especially as we ponder where and how to invest our mission efforts, we face a discernment process. What is our role in God's plan?

EASY MEETING: A TALE OF DISCERNMENT

Jim and Karen Halberg Weaver – Returned
Maryknoll Lay Missioners

Preparation:

1. **Read** through these two pages.
2. **Plan** who will read the passages.
3. **Determine** which discussion questions to use at your meeting and who will lead the discussions.

Meeting Plan

Opening Prayer:

*My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
And the fact that I think that I am following
Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
Does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything
Apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this,
You will lead me by the right
Road though I may know
Nothing about it.
Therefore, will I trust you
Always though I may seem lost
And in the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you
Are forever with me, and you will never leave me
To face my perils alone.*

— A Maryknoll Book of Prayer, p. 100, by Fr. Tom Marti, MM, from a prayer by Thomas Merton from *Thoughts in Solitude* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1958)

Reading:

While still in Bolivia but having completed their work with Maryknoll Lay Missioners, the Halberg-Weavers paused to discern what their next stop would be.

Discernment is one of those words we use often as missionaries. It's a way of trying to be in touch with what really gives us life and paying attention to how God is present in that.

As we began 2014, we committed—as a family—to spending each Sunday afternoon during January

examining our hopes and dreams for the next stage of our lives. Taking steps into the unknown future can be daunting for an individual, so we were well aware of how difficult it would be to meet the hopes of five people. However, our sharing of those hopes fell into place, like a harvest following a good growing season.

Discussion questions:

Think of a time you had to make a major decision. Were you able to set aside time to discuss your options? How many other people did your decision affect? Were these people part of the decision-making process? Did you consciously make prayer part of your discernment process? How long did you ponder your decision?

It was immediately clear that all five of us wanted to live closer to Grandma and Grandpa Halberg, which would mean leaving Bolivia and moving to Washington State. We were also in agreement that our last year in Bolivia would be lived to the full. For the kids, it meant one more school year with their Bolivian friends. For

Karen, it meant leaving her work responsibilities and focusing on “tending the hearth.” And for me, it meant that I would continue my commitment to form a primarily Bolivian parish team.



Photos courtesy of the Halberg Weavers

Halberg Weaver children and friends.

And so our three children began a new school year: Jake in 1st grade, Emma in 5th, and Daniel in 8th. They had a great year. Besides their studies, they participated in traditional Bolivian dancing and learned to play traditional Bolivian instruments. They played basketball with friends and continued to form life-long ties that I'm sure will endure, wherever we live.



First day of school photo.

My work of creating a parish-based community agriculture project continued to solidify and expand. Our parish garden produced enough vegetables to support a full-time gardener who sells its produce twice a week at the church. The German foundation,

Miserior, has become a partner in a full-time team that visits families and acts as a resource for nutrition and gardening advice. Funding for this project is necessary for its continuity. Significantly, this ecological work is now included in the parish vision, formally structured in the pastoral plan.



Ayde selling produce in wheelbarrow.

Discussion Questions:

It is said, “Maryknoll Missioners go where they are needed but not wanted and move on when they are wanted but not needed.” Have you ever faced a transition, a time of moving on, when you could see that what you had achieved would survive and grow in the hands of others? Or conversely, did you ever need to make a change because a position was so frustrating it was not healthy for you? How did your previous experience influence your decision about what to do next? Did you seek out counsel while making the decision?

Our family lived the year of 2014 appreciating all the beautiful, enriching eccentricities and cultural



Jim and son Jake count blessings at Carnaval.

celebrations/customs that make Bolivia and its people so special: the *Carnaval* parade in March; the trip Daniel and I made to southern Bolivia; watching Daniel’s best friends playing on Cochabamba’s team in the national youth soccer tournament; all the parish activities for young children. So many threads of our life in Bolivia were weaving themselves together!



Jake and classmate play soccer.

At the end of the school year, we began the process of packing up and sorting out the things we had collected over the years. Without the help of our Maryknoll friends, our neighbors, and our co-workers, it would have been overwhelming. Casta and Alejandro made many trips in their little car, hauling fridge and stove and rabbits to new homes. One family from the store where we bought most of our groceries showed up



Alejandro, Casta, and their little car.

unexpectedly on our last day with chicken dinners not only for us but also for all who were there helping out. We will forever remember how Bolivians know what to do in the moment, and offering *everything*, with no holding back for what may be needed the next day.

We are now in Washington State, still discerning our next steps. We are in the process of purchasing some farmland near the area where Karen grew up. I am excited about pulling together my mission work by engaging in the growing movement toward local food economies and sustainable, community-supported agriculture. The chance to return to farming offers so much towards our rooting ourselves in the fabric of this rural community.

Over our 20 years in mission, our family has enjoyed an amazing web of relationships. We are grateful for the love and support of so many friends and marvel at the grace of the life we have lived thus far. We are thankful for the support of all who have joined us in our journey, as well as for the awesome Mystery that bumped us together along the way.

Discussion Questions:

Having read the Halberg Weaver family’s story, what will be your approach the next time you are faced with a life-changing decision?

Closing Prayer:

“God, if this is your will, help me. If not, stop me.”

—Father Joseph Veneroso, *A Maryknoll Book of Prayer*, p. 100

To communicate with the Halberg Weavers, please send your email to info@mklm.org, and your message will be forwarded.

