

Last summer, I spent 10 weeks in classes studying spirituality and prayer. The program began with an 8 day silent retreat, and was based on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.

St. Ignatius has laid down as part of his spiritual exercises what are known as the rules for the discernment of spirits. Entire books have been written on this subject, and the diocese offers classes on this exact subject a couple of times during the year.

In the first reading, Hosea tells the Northern Kingdom to stop doing what they're doing. That is, stop worshipping idols. Now this is no surprise to anyone in Samaria. It's not like Hosea spoke his words of prophecy and the king and the people said, "HEY! Where did this golden idol come from?"

In essence, Hosea is speaking the obvious.

This ties in with Ignatius' rule for discernment for those living apart from God's grace. That when people separate themselves from God, the enemy of our souls treats us quite nicely. Encouraging us to continue in our sins.

But Ignatius also points out that it is the Holy Spirit, using reason, that calls us to conversion and repentance. And in the first reading, it is the Holy Spirit speaking through Hosea that calls the people of Israel to repent.

In the Gospel, Jesus heals a man who was not only deaf and mute, but also bothered by demons. In this case, Jesus is living in union with his Father and the Holy Spirit. Yet, his healing is met with opposition and he is even said to be working with the prince of demons.

In this case, Ignatius' rule for discernment says that for those living in God's grace, the enemy of our souls will raise obstacles and use false reasoning to try to draw us away from God.

Jesus' final words, that the harvest is plenty, but laborers are few has been the reality for 2,000 years. After the resurrection, the eleven apostles set out to bring an entire world the Good News of God's love. But with the power of the Holy Spirit, those few apostles were able to draw mountains of people to Faith in Jesus Christ, and reconciliation with God.

Let us pray the master of the harvest to send out laborers for the harvest. And may we through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, become co-workers with God in the Kingdom.