

Guide for the Time of Final Discernment



(For Final Discerners and their Companions)

Be aware

Discernment can be messy and meandering. This “guide” is not a road map but a sampler of practices and possibilities. You and your companion are free to use what is here in ways that best serve your discerning of God’s call. Pay attention to the Spirit’s wisdom and promptings, and consult with the Abbot or Novitiate Team Leader if you wonder how to proceed.

I. Time of Final Discernment (Novitiate)

Purpose This is a time of formation and testing prior to making first public annual vows in the *Service of Profession*. It is a season to “try on the shoes” of vowed life, discerning whether the fit is right.

Focus

- Study, prayer, and shared community (chapter meetings, online daily office prayers, retreats, Covenant Communities)
- Deepening relationship with God and self-awareness
- Exploring vocation to vowed religious life in the Order of Saint Luke
- Discovering and shaping a new way of living in the world through the Order

Duration This period may last from several weeks to a year or more. It is a “Sabbath time” to:

- Deepen your relationship with God

- Live more fully into the Order’s mission through the Rule of Life and Service
- Grow in knowledge of the Order’s traditions and way of life
- Clarify and strengthen your sense of calling within your ministry context

Role of the Companion The companion listens and guides you in study, prayer, and discernment. This may be the same person who accompanied you during Inquiry or another member chosen in consultation with the Companion Coordinator. Relating to a spiritual director—whether or not a member of the Order—is also encouraged.

Admission The novitiate begins with *A Service of Admission to Final Discernment of Vocation*

Horizon The guiding question throughout this time is: *Am I prepared to make my Profession of Vows to God within the Order of Saint Luke?* (see *Book of Offices and Services*, pp. 87–93).

II. Content, Relationships, and Experiences

Work with your companion to map a plan for discernment. Consider engaging with:

- **The Rule of Life and Service**
 - Practice accountability with your companion.
 - Reflect on how the Rule shapes your life and love for God and the world.
 - Explore with your spiritual director what keeping the Rule means for your vocation.
- **Religious Life and Tradition**
 - Study monasticism, religious orders, and the Order’s history.
 - Explore rules and vows of other orders for comparison.
 - Recommended: Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together*; Peters’ *The Monkhood of All Believers*.
- **Lukan Spirituality**
 - Pray the Daily Office regularly.

- Work through *Food for Pilgrims* and other resources on liturgical spirituality.
- Engage deeply in worship and Holy Communion, linking prayer with service to the poor, marginalized, and the creation.
- Choose readings suited to your background (clergy: liturgical theology; laity: sacramental history).
- **Communal Life and Practice**
 - Participate in retreats (General Chapter, local chapter, novice retreats, personal).
 - Share meals, stories, and fellowship.
 - Join in Chapter or Covenant Community prayer and worship.
- **Call to Service**
 - Reflect on your passions and gifts.
 - Consider the seven mission fields: home, work, community, world, leisure, spiritual health, church.
 - Connect your call to service with Lukan spirituality, the Rule, and the Order's mission, vision, and purpose. (See the Constitution, Articles II and III.)
 - Recommended: *Food for Pilgrims*, the chapter on Call to Service.

III. Bringing Your Discernment into Focus

Approaches

- **Autobiographical Statement** — Write 1–2 pages about your life and spiritual journey.
- **Personal Letter** — Write to yourself about your readiness for vows and membership.
 - Share your sense of call.
 - Reflect on what taking annual vows and membership in the community might mean to you.
 - Name reservations or questions.
 - Acknowledge both light and shadow honestly before God.

- **Conference with Spiritual Director** — Discuss affirmations and doubts, light and dark sides of your discernment.

Next Step After completing one of the above—or another helpful approach—share your reflections with your companion.

IV. Concluding the Time of Discernment

You may end discernment at any time, notifying your companion. Outcomes may include:

- Readiness to make first public profession
- Suspension of discernment for a season
- Termination, recognizing your vocation lies elsewhere

Reflect on your determination with your companion, seeking mutual discernment.

V. Reporting a Discernment

- **Readiness for First Profession** — Companion reports to the Registrar and the Novitiate Team Leader, who will notify the Abbot and the Chancellor General.
- **Suspension or Termination** — Discerner and companion notify the Registrar and Novitiate Team Leader.
- **Reflection** — Whatever the outcome, reflect together on what has been good and helpful.

VI. Membership

Upon completing discernment and affirming readiness, the Discerner makes their first public profession of vows in a *Service of Profession* at an annual retreat, local chapter, or in Covenant Community.

After profession:

- Complete the Annual Affirmation form [Reaffirmation](#).

- Continue as an annually vowed member, reaffirming your intention each year by completing the reaffirmation form (per Constitution, Article V, Section 2: “Continued Membership”).
- The Annual Affirmation is completed each October, on or near the Feast of Saint Luke.