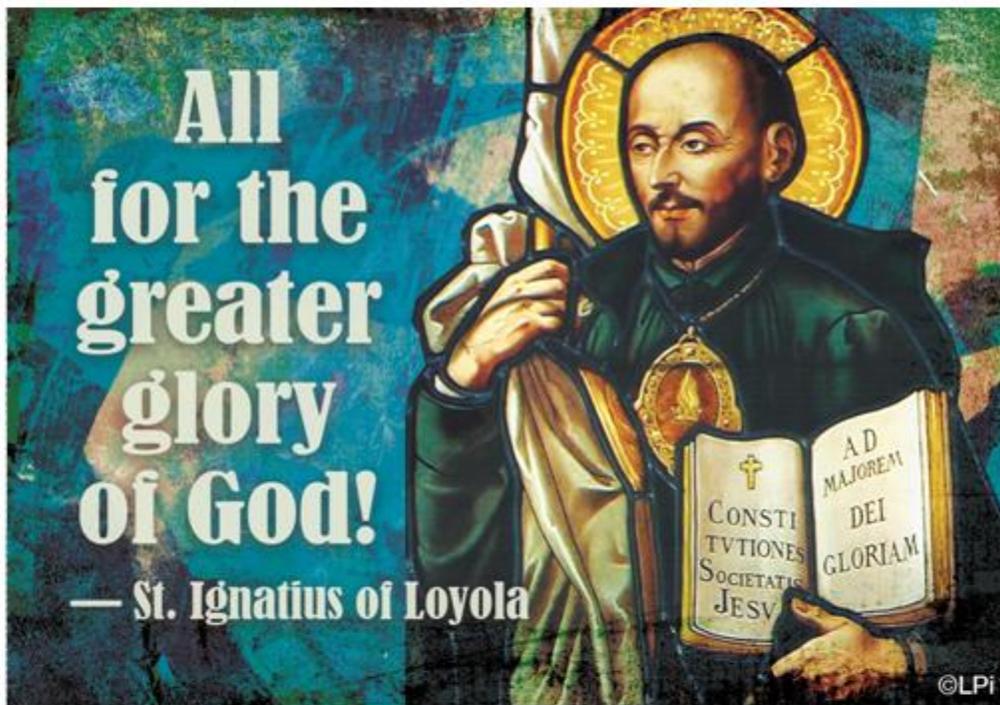




Institute for Spiritual Direction

**You Can't Win the War
If You Can't See Your Enemy**



Ignatian Retreat Study Guide

*Spiritual Growth Based on St. Ignatius of Loyola's
Rules for Discernment of Spirits*

Ignatian Retreat Study Guide – You Can’t Win the War if You Can’t See Your Enemy

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First Printing: 2021

ISBN 9798754367524

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Okemos, Michigan 48864

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Ordering Information: Visit [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), enter 9798754367524 in search box.

Special discounts are available on quantity purchases by corporations, associations, educators, and others.
For details, contact the publisher at drosenberg@isdministries.org

U.S. trade bookstores and wholesalers: Please contact ISD Publications Tel: 734.408.1852;
email: bookstore@isdministries.org

Opening Prayer Before Each Chapter

The Prayer for Generosity of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
To give and not to count the cost,
To fight and not to heed the wounds
To toil and not to seek for rest
To labor and not to ask for reward,
Save that of knowing that I do your will. Amen.

Closing Prayer After Each Chapter

Ignatian Suscipe Prayer

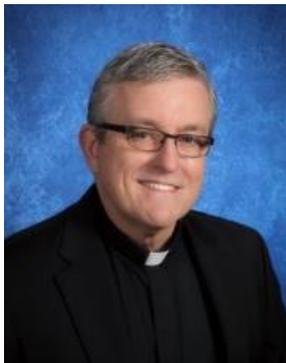
Take Lord, and receive all my liberty,
My memory, my understanding,
And my entire will,
All I have and possess.
You have given it all to me,
And I return it, Lord, to you.
Everything is yours;
Dispose of it only according to your will.
Give me only your love and your grace;
For me, that is enough. Amen.

Introduction: What are the Rules of Discernment of St. Ignatius of Loyola?

The Rules of Discernment are meant to help us recognize the actions of good and evil in our spiritual lives and to respond accordingly. “Rules” can sound a bit legalistic, but these rules are meant to lead us to spiritual freedom. As we realize the strategy of both the good and evil spirits we learn to resist temptation and to cling to the truths of our faith. Consolations and desolations fill the life of every believer and they can cause confusion if we do not understand their origin and their purpose.

Ignatius skillfully enlightens our understanding so that little by little we learn to recognize the forces at work within our souls. The Ignatian Retreat is designed to encourage spiritual depth and growth, always relying on the grace freely given us.

Fr. David Rosenberg, Director



Chapter One -- Overview

You Can't Win the War if You Can't See Your Enemy: Spiritual Growth Based on St. Ignatius of Loyola's Rules for Discernment of Spirits is a study guide for those seeking an introduction to Ignatian Spirituality. It is geared toward any Christian with an interest in deeper spiritual growth.

This Study Guide should be read, studied and reflected on prior to your Retreat.

"You Can't Win the War if You Can't See Your Enemy"

This title points out one of the greatest benefits. We will learn to recognize the work of the evil spirit in our spiritual lives, and we will learn strategies to defeat him. Ignatius was a military man and he appreciates the value of evaluating the situation and recognizing a strategy for victory. And he keeps his eyes on the ultimate goal—to recognize the work of the good spirit, and to follow him to victory.

Introduction

Discernment – signifies the process of distinguishing one thing or idea from another.

Of Spirits – describes what is to be discerned, that is, which spiritual realities of good versus evil are to be distinguished, one from the other

Purpose- These rules for discernment, therefore, do not apply only to the formal time of retreat but also to the ongoing spiritual experience and disciplines of all who seek the Lord.

St. Ignatius of Loyola

Early Life

- Born in the Castle Loyola, in the Basque country of Northeastern Spain-1491
- Family-Catholic, highly pious but lacked morals
- Family lived a Catholic contradiction of sorts
- Raised to be courtier and a diplomat in service to the Crown (advisor who sits on the royal court).
- Not well educated-which was typical of his class
- Soldier in 1521
- During the battle a cannonball hit Ignatius in the leg
- He didn't heal/recover well...he was on the verge of death
- Experienced deep Conversion

- Ignatius is confined to his bed for months
- To pass the time he asked for reading material.
- He was given devout books on the life of Christ and books on the lives of the Saints
- Gradually Ignatius' interest is awakened.
- Gave himself over completely to service of God

Discussion Questions for Chapter One

1. *What does the phrase "discernment of spirits mean?"*

This is the process by which we seek to distinguish between different kinds of spiritual stirrings in our hearts, identifying their source, whether from God or from the evil one.

2. *How does one become spiritually aware?*

It begins by examining our thoughts and emotions to understand what the motivation may be and what the source

Assigned Reading:

Before continuing to Chapter Two, read Rule 1 and Rule 2 included in the "Text of the Rules," found at the end of this Study Guide.

Chapter Two

Rule 1 and Rule 2

Brief Review

From Rule 1 we learn that if a person is moving away from God and toward sin, the evil spirit is encouraging them on this path by temptations to evil pleasures. The good spirit appeals to his conscience by “stinging” and biting” to lead this to Godly desires and behavior.

Rule 2 is the opposite of Rule 1. This person is sincerely seeking God. The evil spirit will attempt to discourage and sadden this person. God will encourage them with strength and loving consolations.

Rule 1

When a Person Moves Away From God

When a person is going from mortal sin to mortal sin, the enemy is ordinarily accustomed to proposing apparent pleasures to them, leading them to imagine sensual delights and pleasures in order to hold them and to make them grow in their vices and sins. In these persons the good spirit uses a contrary method, stinging and biting their consciences through their rational power of moral judgment.

Two fundamental directions in the spiritual life

- First: Movement *away* from God and *toward* serious sin
- Second: Movement *toward* God and *away* from serious sin

Someone who is moving away from God through serious sin is probably NOT:

- Praying
- Taking advantage of the sacraments (e.g. Mass, confession)
- Reading scripture

The Enemy

- The source of such movements is the ENEMY
- Enemy :
 - Satan
 - Demons
 - Tendencies in our own psyches which spring from egoism and disordered sensuality
 - Other individual human persons insofar as they are an influence of evil in our lives
 - Weakness of our own humanity
 - The world around us

Action of the Enemy

- The enemy acts in ordinarily certain ways
- Ordinary ways in which the enemy is accustomed to act

- In persons entrenched in serious sin the enemy works on the imagination which confirms them all the more in their vices and sins
- The enemy places imagined delights before the person

Actions of the Good Spirit

- Uses a contrary method
- Good spirit acts on one's rational power (NOT the imagination) biting and stinging their consciences
- The enemy works on the lust-filled imagination, but the good spirit works on the holy imagination and the rational faculty of the soul.

Rule 2

When a Person Moves Toward God

In persons who are intent on intensely purifying their sins and rising from good to better in the service of God our Lord, the method is contrary to that in the first rule. For them it is proper to the evil spirit to bite, sadden, and place obstacles, disquieting with false reasons, so that the person may not go forward. And it is proper to the good spirit to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and quiet, easing and taking away all obstacles, so that the person may go forward in doing good.

People intensely purifying their sins

- Rising from good to better in the service of God our Lord
- Trying to eliminate sin
- Trying to grow in service of God

How to work to overcome sin:

- Lectio Divina and Other Prayers
- Sacraments; Devotion to the Eucharist
- Devotion to Mary
- Intercession through the Saints
- Calling on their guardian angel
- Having as friends your Community of believers
- Weekly Small Group Discipleship gathering

Action of the Enemy

- Biting That Unsettles
- **Rule 1**- The good spirit bites the conscience
- **Rule 2** – The enemy stirs up an unsettling biting
- Biting elicits a sense of anxiety to diminish interior peace

Sadness

Rule 1: The good spirit stirred up Godly sorrow to move the individual to repentance and conversion.

Rule 2: Different sadness

- Sadness with respect to God, to prayer, to the love of others in God.
- Sadness w/respect to everything involved in the pursuit of God's will.

Obstacles

- Problems and difficulties associated with the practices we've put in place to deepen our life of faith:

Virtue of hope

- There is no obstacle that cannot be overcome through the grace of God

Discussion Questions:

Rule 1

1. How does the good spirit react when someone is moving away from God through sinful behavior?

The good spirit reacts to sting and biting one's conscience through their rational power of moral judgment.

2. Who is the enemy?

The "enemy" can come from many sources. It isn't always the devil that made me do it. It can also be tendencies in our own psyches which spring from egoism and disordered sensuality, the weakness of our own humanity or the influence to the culture around us. Of course, Satan and the demons that prowl about the earth are also responsible.

Rule 2

1. What happens during periods of consolation in our life?

We move towards God and are filled with peace, joy and love.

2. What can we do to overcome sin?

Prayer, Sacraments, devotion to the Eucharist, devotion to Mary, intercession through the Saints, calling on our guardian angel and the community of believers are all ways to grow in holiness and overcome sin.

Assigned Reading:

Before continuing to Chapter Three, read Rule 3 and Rule 4 included in the "Text of the Rules," found at the end of this Study Guide.

Chapter Three

Rule 3 and Rule 4

Brief Review

Spiritual consolation is a gift from God that gives his faithful followers a perceptible experience of God's love. Rule 3 teaches us how to properly discern spiritual consolation. Rule 4 is the opposite of rule 3. The faithful soul experiences desolation, darkness and sadness in their spiritual life. These attacks of the evil spirit cause much difficulty and the good spirit teaches us to resist these attacks and diminish their power.

Rule 3

Spiritual Consolation

Consolation can be defined as an interior movement caused in the soul, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord. The soul can love no created thing on the face of the earth itself, but only in the Creator of them all. Likewise, when it sheds tears that move to love of its Lord, whether out of sorrow for one's sins or the passion of Christ our Lord or because of other things directly ordered to his service and praise. Finally, I call consolation every increase in hope, faith, and charity, and all interior joy that calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, quieting it and giving it peace in its Creator and Lord.

Forms of Spiritual Consolation

- Ignatius does not use a definition but rather a *series of experiences* to explain spiritual consolation
- Meaning emerges from all of our experiences and we grasp the Lord's sense of spiritual consolation
- "When the Soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord" there is a sense of God's love
- Such experiences differ in intensity and may be powerfully felt
- Such experiences differ in duration
- May be just a brief moment
- May be throughout a period of prayer
- May be for several days or weeks
- This second description of spiritual consolation presupposes the first and highlights a consequence of the inflaming of love of God in the heart.
- The enkindling of the love of God within us causes our love for all other
- persons and things to harmonize with the central love of God
- Causes freedom (detachment)
- Struggles between God's will and created things lessens

- The type of spiritual consolation Ignatius next mentions manifests the involvement of the *whole* person in spiritual consolation.
- It is the physical human person who experiences spiritual consolation and the movements of the heart, at times, find bodily expression in the tears that accompany and complete the experience
- Increase of the three theological virtues of Hope, Faith, and Charity”

A final form of spiritual consolation consists of joy

- These are the experiences in which our hearts rise in happiness before God, with a joy that “calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one’s soul

Rule 4

Spiritual Desolation

The fourth rule is spiritual desolation. Desolation is all the contrary to the third rule, such as darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to low and earthly things, disquiet from various agitations and temptations, moving to lack of confidence, without hope, without love, finding oneself totally slothful, tepid, sad, and, as if separated from one’s creator and Lord. Just as consolation is contrary to desolation, in the same way the thoughts that come from consolation are contrary to the thoughts that come from desolation.

The Enemy at Work

- It is in spiritual desolation that the enemy, the evil spirit, is at work and trying to guide us
- the enemy works on the level of our intellect and reason

Spiritual Desolation vs Non-Spiritual Desolation

- Non-Spiritual (Natural) Desolation
- Distinction is critical

Common examples of non-spiritual desolation

- Lack of sleep
- Over/under eating
- Psychological illness

Darkness of The Soul

- Person feels trapped in confusion
- Unable to comprehend what is happening
- Sense that things are going badly and will only get worse

Important to Remember

- God gives consolation
- God *allows* desolation (rule 9)
- God never gives spiritual desolation
- He permits it to be given by another agent – the evil spirit
- As we faithfully resist and reject spiritual desolation we learn spiritual lessons

Discussion Questions for Chapter 3

Rule 3

1. *How long can we expect spiritual consolation to last?*

The experience may last only minutes or hours or may go on for weeks. It is impossible to say because consolation is a gift from God and not under the control of the human being.

2. *What theological virtues increase during times of consolation?*

One will find an increase in faith, hope and charity.

Rule 4

1. *What is spiritual desolation?*

It is a movement to low and earthly things, disquiet from various agitations and temptations and a lack of confidence where one lacks hope and is filled with sadness.

2. *What is non-spiritual desolation?*

Sometimes we exhibit feeling of desolation which does not have a spiritual origin. Clinical depression and other types of psychological issues often result in non-spiritual desolation.

Assigned Reading:

Before continuing to Chapter Four, read Rule 5 and Rule 6 included in the “Text of the Rules,” found at the end of this Study Guide.

Chapter Four

Rule 5 and Rule 6

Brief Review

In a time of spiritual desolation do not make any major spiritual changes. Remain firm and constant in your spiritual resolutions. Insist on more prayer and meditate on the truths of the faith. Never be passive and always actively resist the temptations of the evil spirit. This gives us ground for great hope.

Rule 5

Spiritual Desolation: A Time for Fidelity

In times of desolation never make a change, but be firm and constant in the proposals and determination in which one was the day preceding such desolation, or in the determination in which one was in the preceding consolation. Because, as in consolation the good spirit guides and counsels us more, so in desolation the bad spirit guides, therefore, we cannot find the way to a right decision.

Fifth rule has two parts

- 1st part is a guideline
- 2nd part is a reason

Never make a change During Times of Desolation

- Ignatius is talking about changes with direct pertinence to our life of faith and the pursuit of God's will
- If there is a time of spiritual desolation, then there is a period of time preceding the time of spiritual desolation
- In those days or moments preceding desolation what spiritual proposals or determinations did we have in place?
- NOTE that Ignatius is talking about spiritual desolation and the changes he refers to are matters of our life of faith
- Natural desolation might call for some changes to be made, more sleep, added exercise, better nutrition, time with friends and family or vacation
- The tactic of the enemy in the darkness of spiritual desolation is to suggest that we reverse the decisions taken in preceding times of light; into this trap says Ignatius, we must never fall.
- Rather we must remain firm and constant in such proposals throughout the time of spiritual desolation
- Spiritual desolation calls for constancy and fidelity.
- In times of spiritual desolation absolutely no changes should be made to spiritual proposals decided upon before the desolation began

Rule 5 offers us freedom

- In times of desolation we begin to doubt, to reconsider, to plan changes
- If we are able to become aware of the fact that we are in desolation, we understand that this is spiritual, we now know what to do...it is settled
 - I will not make a change

- All doubts about making such changes are resolved such changes should not be made
- Spiritual desolation is a time of the lie and its wisdom should never be followed. We must remain firm and constant in our previous proposal

Rule 6

Spiritual Desolation: A Time for Initiative

Although in desolation we should not change our first proposals, it is very advantageous to change ourselves intensely against the desolation itself, as by insisting more upon prayer, meditation, upon much examination, and upon extending ourselves in some suitable way of doing penance.

How to change against desolation:

- More prayer and meditation
- Examination of conscience
- Penance

- In other words, do not change our first proposals that were good practices such as Bible study and regular Mass attendance
- Rather, we are changing ourselves against the desolation itself

These rules help us accomplish three things up to this point:

- Avoiding collaboration with the enemy's urgings
- Acting intensely against the desolation itself
- To be an active participant in our own spiritual life

- God's call is always to take active steps to resist and reject the desolation itself (Even if God does permit it)
- The virtue of hope is expressed by working to change ourselves against desolation

Ignatius outlines the various spiritual means that serve to help us change ourselves:

1. Prayer
 - Ask God and all those who intercede for us (Blessed Mother, Saints and angels)
 - Turning toward God in those moments counters the temptation downward and lifts our minds back toward heaven

2. Meditation
 - Ignatius asks us to be brave and to make a conscious decision to stop and meditate on what is going on
 - Examining our lives counters the temptation to divert our spiritual energies elsewhere

3. Penance
 - Energizes us in a spiritually healthy way.

Discussion Questions for Chapter 4

Rule 5

1. *What is one of the most important things to remember during times of spiritual desolation?*
It is most important not to make any changes during this time because the reasoning may be faulty.
2. *Why is it OK to make changes during natural desolation?*
Natural desolation might call for some changes to be made such as more sleep, added exercise or better nutrition.

Rule 6

1. *We should not make changes during times of Spiritual desolation be we can still fight against it. What can we do?*
We can change ourselves against the desolation itself by adding more prayer and meditation to our day, plus an examination of conscience and penance.
2. *Why is penance a good weapon against spiritual desolation?*
Penance energizes us in a spiritually healthy way giving us the ability to oppose the action of the enemy and to resist moving away from God.

Assigned Reading:

Before continuing to Chapter Five, read Rule 7 and Rule 8 included in the “Text of the Rules,” found at the end of this Study Guide.

Chapter Five

Rule 7 and Rule 8

Brief Overview

In times of desolation remember that God allows it in order to strengthen us and teach us to resist attacks of the evil spirit and bear them without incurring spiritual harm.

We must work diligently to be patient and to think about the consolations that will soon return. Our proper thinking will help us and lead to a kind of spiritual liberation.

Rule 7

Spiritual Desolation: A Time for Resistance

Let one who is in desolation consider how the Lord has left him in trial in his natural powers, so that he may resist the various agitations and temptations of the enemy; since he can resist with divine help, which always remains with him, though he does not clearly feel it; for the Lord has taken away from him his great fervor, abundant love, and intense grace, leaving him, however, sufficient grace for eternal salvation.

Three related elements:

- Trial
- Nature of the trial
- Purpose in allowing this trial to occur

Trial

- Desolation seen from God's perspective is a trial
- We are now aware of the fact that God is intervening in this experience
- Once the darkness acquires meaning in God, we gain new spiritual energy to resist and reject desolation itself
- Struggle makes us stronger
- Guided to spiritual maturity in ways that spiritual consolation alone could not accomplish
- The spiritual life is NOT about good, warm, exciting feelings

Ignatius reminds us that even when we can't feel it the divine help always remains with us supplying sufficient grace for eternal salvation

- Therefore, we must consider what we cannot feel
- God always gives us sufficient grace, not only to pass through the trial safely, but also to grow spiritually toward our eternal salvation through resisting
- Remembering and Forgetting
 - There are two things that are most difficult in the spiritual life:
 - Staying in love (it's easy to fall in love...consolation)
 - Difficult to stay in love in the middle of desolation

- Forgetfulness is one of the obstacles that the enemy will place in front of those moving from good to better in service of the Lord
- In desolation we are induced to forget the love the Lord has for us

Rule 8

Spiritual Desolation: A Time for Patience

Let one who is in desolation work to be in patience, which is contrary to the vexations which come to him, and let him think that he will soon be consoled, diligently using the means against desolation, as is said in the sixth rule.

Patience

- Not surrender, but perseverance until the time of trial passes and peace of heart returns

There is a two-fold call in this rule

- Work to be in patience
- Think that consolation will soon return
- This thinking is linked to action – using the means given in the sixth rule
 - Prayer meditation
 - Examine
 - Penance

Work

- Ignatius tells us to WORK to be patient
- This is not something that we can just will
- We have to work at it
- The more we work at it in the midst of the trial the more it becomes the virtue we seek (a habit)

Thought

- Think that you will soon be consoled
- The enemy tries to claim power over our past, present, and future
- The evil one lies to us and tries to get us to believe that the current trial of desolation will continue on and on
- That we will always feel like this

Spiritual Consolation and Desolation

- Neither consolation nor desolation last forever
- One will eventually give way to the other
- Both spiritual consolation and
- spiritual desolation lie within God's loving providence

Discussion Questions for Chapter 5

Rule 7

1. *How does God view desolation?*

Desolation seen from God's perspective is a trial that helps us to grow and mature spiritually.

2. *How can we actually benefit from desolation?*

We can benefit from desolation when we realize that it is only a trial that God has allowed for our benefit and that it will not last forever.

Rule 8

1. *What is an important character trait to adopt during times of desolation?*

Patience is definitely an important trait during times of desolation. It is important to persevere and to "stay the course" during those difficult times.

2. *What is one of the obstacles that the enemy might place in front of you during times of Desolation?*

Forgetfulness is one of the biggest obstacles. The person forgets what the love of God feels like and begins to fear that they will always feel sad and abandoned.

Assigned Reading:

Before continuing to Chapter Six, read Rule 9 and Rule 10 included in the "Text of the Rules," found at the end of this Study Guide.

Chapter Six

Rule 9 and Rule 10

Brief Review

Rule 9 teaches us that there are three principal reasons God allows us to experience desolation. We may be slothful or negligent in our spiritual priorities. He also teaches us to serve him even when we experience no consolation. Finally, it makes us realize that all consolations are purely a gift from God. Rule 10 teaches that when we are in spiritual consolation we should prepare ourselves for the desolation that will surely follow.

Rule 9

Why Does God Allow Spiritual Desolation?

There are three principal causes of desolation. The first is because we are tepid, slothful, or negligent in our spiritual exercises, and so through our faults, spiritual consolation withdraws from us. The second is to try us and see how much we extend ourselves in his service and graces. The third, is to give us true understanding so that we don't believe that it is our responsibility to attain or maintain increased devotion, intense love, tears or any other spiritual consolation, but rather that it is all a gift and grace of God; thus sparing us from vainglory that attributives spiritual consolation to the level of human effort alone.

Why does a good and loving God permit me to experience this pain?

- Spiritual desolation is a trial permitted by God as that, by resisting, we may learn to resist.
- Desolation is a valuable lesson through which learning is gained and growth in spiritual maturity is achieved

Conversion

- Once we become aware of our negligence in our spiritual practices we can then take steps to correct the situation.
- The God's cause in permitting the desolation is fulfilled
- Desolation has made one aware of the need for change (conversion).

Learning

- God allows us to experience spiritual desolation to try us and to see how much we are willing to extend ourselves in his service and praise with the payment of consolation

Humility

- We are not spiritually sufficient unto ourselves; we cannot save ourselves and must rely completely on the grace of God. When we realize that we are powerless over our compulsions, habits, disordered desires, etc. then we understand our great need for God's saving power. With particular intensity in times of spiritual desolation we feel interiorly that this is not something that we are capable of on our own. Such humility opens our hearts to receive further blessings from God who gives grace to the humble. Receptivity is the key to humility.

- When we examine our current spiritual situation well and understand its cause, we are then ready to resist it with new energy and wisdom.
- It is important that in times of spiritual desolation we ask ourselves: Why am I in this spiritual desolation? Why am I feeling this way? What is the cause of this spiritual desolation?

Rule 10

Spiritual Consolation: A Time to Prepare

Let the one who is in consolation think about how he will conduct himself in the desolation which will come after, and drawing new strength for that time. In this Rule Ignatius prepares us to resist spiritual desolation while we are actually experiencing consolation. There is an identifiable time when we are in spiritual consolation and we now center on this time and come to understand how we can use this time preparing to resist the spiritual desolation to follow.

Time Enjoyed

- Before spiritual consolation serves any additional purpose, however valuable, such consolation is above all a gift of God to be received with gratitude and from which to gain new energy in the ways God intends; it is God's look of love upon us, imprinting grace within our hearts.

The Thinking Prepares

- Let the one who is in consolation think how he will conduct himself in the desolation which will come after
- It must be a conscious decision to think about how to deal with desolation during times of consolation

If We Are Not Prepared

- Unanticipated spiritual desolation leaves us more readily prey to an unreflective equation of this desolation with some failure on our part such as forgetting the various cause for which God may permit it

If We Are Prepared

- If we have thought ahead in time of spiritual consolation to the return of spiritual desolation and have prepared, the desolation will not then come with "a confusing shock of surprise" we will be ready to resist more quickly, with the help of God's grace, which is always sufficient for our need

Help for Strength in Future Spiritual Desolation

- Prayer and meditation helps to reinforce the conviction of God's faithful love
- Remember that God permits desolation for reasons of love, that without it we would remain spiritual children, that through the trial of desolation we grow in learning, in evangelical humility, and in spiritual maturity in general
- In times of spiritual consolation we can reflect on the times when God has given us growth though the trial of spiritual desolation
- In time of desolation never make a change but be firm and constant in the proposals and determination in which one was the days preceding such desolation.

Discussion Questions for Chapter Six

Rule 9

1. *What are some of the causes of spiritual desolation?*

Some of the causes are a neglect of spiritual practices, God's desire to teach us a valuable lesson and God's desire to give us the gift of humility.

2. *Why is humility important?*

Humility enables us to turn towards God for salvation because we understand that we cannot save ourselves and must rely completely on the grace of God.

Rule 10

1. *Why is it important to think about the coming of spiritual desolation while we are experiencing consolation?*

It is a good idea to prepare for desolation when we have the strength and energy that comes with consolation so that we have solid strategies in place during our weakened condition.

2. *What is another benefit of being well prepared?*

When we are well prepared for Desolation it does not catch us off guard and come with the confusing shock of surprise.

Assigned Reading:

Before continuing to Chapter Seven, read Rule 11 and Rule 12 included in the "Text of the Rules," found at the end of this Study Guide.

Chapter Seven

Rule 11 and Rule 12

Brief Review

A person of spiritual maturity and discernment will maintain a firm spiritual balance in times of consolation and desolation. Ongoing spiritual awareness leads us to discernment which leads to spiritual freedom. If we respond with strength to the enemy's temptations, the enemy will grow weak and lose heart. If we are weak in confronting temptation the enemy grows stronger and harder to resist.

Rule 11

Spiritual Consolation and Spiritual Desolation: Finding Our Balance

Let one who is consoled to seek humility and lower himself as much as he can, thinking of how little he is capable in the time of desolation without such grace or consolation. On the contrary, let one who is in desolation think that he can do much with God's sufficient grace to resist all his enemies, taking strength in his Creator and Lord.

Both Spiritual Movements in a Single Rule

- Prior to this point in the rules Ignatius has focused on each of these two spiritual movements individually and counseled us regarding how we are to think and act during the one and the other.
- In his eleventh rule he brings together the separate pieces and gives us a total picture of the discerning person, able to maintain a firm spiritual balance amid the ongoing alternations of spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation.
- The eleventh rule describes both responses and, in placing both side by side, highlights the resulting spiritual balance toward which Ignatius would guide persons of discernment.

In Spiritual Consolation: A Humble Heart

- The person in spiritual consolation is to seek a humble heart
- A heart that is humble is a heart completely open to embrace God's call
- Humility serves to keep one focused on the fact that times of consolation come directly from God and not through our own efforts

In Spiritual Desolation: A Trusting Heart

- Here there is a sense of great spiritual insecurity where patience and trust in the Lord is necessary
- God's grace is always sufficient to resist all temptations from the evil one

Maintaining Spiritual Balance

- The indispensable presupposition of balance is daily spiritual awareness
- What makes the spiritual balance possible is the continual transition from "myself-in" to "myself-reflection-on-myself-in" spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation

Rule 12

Standing Firm in the Beginnings

The enemy acts like a person who is weak when faced with strength and strong when faced with weakness. For, as it is proper for a weak person, when fighting with another, to lose heart and to flee when confronted firmly, and, on the contrary, if the strong one begins to flee, losing heart, the anger, vengeance, and ferocity of the weak one grows greatly and know no bounds, in the same way, it is proper to the enemy to weaken and lose heart, fleeing and ceasing his temptations when the person who is exercised in spiritual things confronts the temptations of the enemy firmly, doing what is diametrically opposed; and, on the contrary, of the person who is exercising oneself begins to be afraid and lose heart in suffering the temptations, there is no beast so fierce on the face of the earth as the enemy of human nature in following out his damnable intention with such growing malice.

The Problematic Metaphor

- Ignatius describes anti-human qualities of the enemy's workings
- One current example of a change in metaphor is David Fleming's metaphor of a spoiled child
- If a person is "firm" with such spoiled children, they "give up their petulant ways of action." If, however, a person "shows indulgence or weakness in any way," "such" children are merciless in trying to get what they want, stomping their feet in defiance or wheedling their way into favor

The Application of the Metaphor

- When persons are firm in confronting the temptations of the enemy,
- the enemy weakens, loses heart, and ceases to tempt them
- Essentially, what Ignatius is saying, is that the enemy is weak
- Too often we falsely believe that the enemy is strong

The Snowball Effect

- When a snowball is just forming on the mountainside, it is easiest to stop it right in the beginning, when it is first forming. It doesn't take a whole lot of effort
- But, when it has travelled halfway down the mountain, gaining size and speed, there is going to be an avalanche.
- The enemy's temptations, if resisted firmly when they first begin, simply stop
- When, however, we respond indecisively, allowing the temptation to linger in our minds, the temptation grows and snowballs out of control.

Discussion Questions for Chapter Seven

Rule 11

3. *What are some of the causes of spiritual desolation?*

Some of the causes are a neglect of spiritual practices, God's desire to teach us a valuable lesson and God's desire to give us the gift of humility.

4. *Why is humility important?*

Humility enables us to turn towards God for salvation because we understand that we cannot save ourselves and must rely completely on the grace of God.

Rule 12

3. *Why is it important to think about the coming of spiritual desolation while we are experiencing consolation?*

It is a good idea to prepare for desolation when we have the strength and energy that comes with consolation so that we have solid strategies in place during our weakened condition.

4. *What is another benefit of being well prepared?*

When we are well prepared for Desolation it does not catch us off guard and come with the confusing shock of surprise.

Assigned Reading:

Before continuing to Chapter Eight, read Rule 13 and Rule 14 included in the "Text of the Rules," found at the end of this Study Guide.

Chapter Eight

Rule 13 and Rule 14

Brief Overview

Rule 13 explains that the enemy wants us to remain silent during times of desolation because if his deceptions are secret he can bury them deeper in our hearts. When we reveal them to a spiritually competent person we are freed from discouragement. We must allow God's light to shine on our personal darkness. In Rule 14 we are reminded that the enemy knows our weakest point and attacks us there. We can learn to recognize where this weak point is and strengthen it before the attack begins. Thus the enemy is defeated.

Rule 13

Breaking the Spiritual Silence

The evil one conducts himself as a false lover in wishing to remain in the shadows and not be revealed. When the enemy of human nature brings his wiles and persuasions to the just soul, he wishes and desires that they be received and kept in secret; but when one reveals them to one's good confessor or to another spiritual person, who knows his deceits and malicious designs he is disarmed and slinks away because he knows that he will not be able to succeed with the malicious undertakings he has begun.

Crucial Importance

- The enemy urges us into silence
- Some people find themselves in a situation of spiritual confusion, doubt, or discouragement
- Do NOT make spiritual changes during this time
- Find a qualified spiritual companion and talk about your feelings
- The enemy may very well be involved in alienating you

Who Is the appropriate spiritual person to talk to?

- Speak to someone who understands the deceits and malicious designs of the enemy
- Someone you know and respect
- Chosen previously as confessor because of the confidence the troubled person feels in him

Judicious Choices

- Suitably trained spiritual directors
- Retreat directors
- Spiritually experienced clergy
- Members of religious communities
- A spiritual friend

Do not choose someone just because you like them and enjoy their company

What Is To Be Communicated?

- Counseling vs. Spiritual Conversation
- The spiritual guide must recognize when the interior trouble is nonspiritual and so beyond the purview of spiritual direction

Rule 14

Strengthening the Weak Point

The evil one takes on the role of a leader, intent upon conquering and stealing what he desires. For, just as a captain and leader of an army in the field, pitching his camp and exploring the fortifications and defenses of a stronghold, attacks it at the weakest point, in the same way the enemy, roving about, looks at all of our theological, cardinal and moral virtues; and where he find us weakest and most in need of eternal salvation is where he attacks and attempts to overtake us.

How are we to respond?

- Resist strongly
- Talk to the appropriate person
- We must become aware of our weakest point and strengthen it before the attack begins
- We must examine our theological, cardinal, and moral virtues
- We must fortify all of our strongholds and be aware that an attack from the enemy will surely come

An Individual Point of Need

- In addition to the tactics that apply to all persons seeking God, Ignatius assumes that each faithful person will have an individual weakest point and will, consequently, be subjected to a personally directed attack
- Deep self-knowledge is necessary if one is to recognize and resist the influence of the enemy
- Ignatius encourages the faithful to identify any existing weakest point in their spiritual life and to work to strengthen that point
- If they do not they will remain susceptible to the enemy's attacks exactly where they are least able to defend themselves
- They will be continually exposed to harm

Questions to help Assist One in Determining Points of Vulnerability

- Is there some situation that frequently discourages me?
- The frequently strips me of spiritual energy?
- Are there circumstances in which I often become afraid?
- Become worn out?
- In which I feel spiritually helpless?
- Is there one recurring way in which I find myself spiritually weakened?
- Does one thing seem to diminish most my energy to love and serve others?

Discussion Questions for Chapter Eight

Rule 13

1. *Why is it important not to remain silent during times of spiritual desolation?*

A Spiritual director is most important during times of desolation because they can give wise counsel and an objective perspective of that you are going through.

2. *Who would be another appropriate person to talk with?*

A trusted confessor, spiritual director or accountability partner would also be a good choice because they know and understand you and can point out precious patterns of experiences.

Rule 14

1. *Why is it important that we know what our weaknesses are when dealing with the evil one?*

It is important to know because that is where the evil one will strike.

2. *How can we come to recognize our weak points?*

We can do this by knowing what situations serve to discourage us and cause us to become worn out with feelings of helplessness

Chapter Nine

Conclusion: Setting Captives Free

Brief Review

Rule 13 explains that the enemy wants us to remain silent during times of desolation because if his deceptions remain secret he can bury them deeper in our hearts. When we reveal them to a spiritually competent person we are freed from discouragement. We must allow God's light to shine in our personal darkness. The enemy knows our weakest point and attacks us there. We can learn to recognize where this weak point is and strengthen it before the attack begins. Thus the enemy is defeated.

Conclusion

Setting Captives Free

In his 14 rules, Ignatius proclaims to all dedicated persons that humble and persevering discernment of spirits – spiritual awareness, understanding, and action can set them free from slavery to spiritual desolation and the deceptions of the enemy.

- Spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation are common experiences for all persons who seek God
- These tactics of the enemy are “present in everyone” and yet “no one knows of them,” or knows of them with the clarity our tradition makes possible, until they have been set forth by an elder conversant in the wisdom of discernment
- The power of these rules in large part consists in this: that Ignatian Spirituality *explains us to ourselves*
- Growth takes time, and growth in discernment is no exception to this universal human law
- Discernment of spirits is the quest for freedom, a spiritual adventure that leads surely to the God whose love never ceases to call our hearts

The Text of the Rules of Discernment

Rule 1: The first rule: in persons who are going from mortal sin to mortal sin, the enemy is ordinarily accustomed to propose apparent pleasures to them, leading them to imagine sensual delights and pleasures in order to hold them more and make them grow in their vices and sins. In these persons the good spirit uses a contrary method, stinging and biting their consciences through their rational power of moral judgment.

Rule 2: The second: in persons who are going on intensely purifying their sins and rising from good to better in the service of God is proper in the service of God our Lord, the method is contrary to that in the first rule. For then it is proper to the evil spirit to bite, sadden, and place obstacles, disquieting with false reasons, so that the person may not go forward. And it is proper to the good spirit to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and quiet, easing and taking away all obstacles, so that the person may go forward in doing good.

Rule 3: The third is of spiritual consolation. I call it consolation when some interior movement is caused in the soul, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord, and consequently when it can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but only in the Creator of them all. Likewise when it sheds tears that move to love of its Lord, whether out of sorrow for one's sins, or for the passion of Christ our Lord, or because of other things directly ordered to his service and praise. Finally, I call consolation every increase of hope, faith, and charity, and all interior joy that calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, quieting it and giving it peace in its Creator and Lord.

Rule 4: The fourth is of spiritual desolation. I call desolation all the contrary of the third rule, such as darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to low and earthly things, disquiet from various agitations and temptations, moving to lack of confidence, without hope, without love, finding oneself totally slothful, tepid, sad and, as if separated from one's Creator and Lord. For just as consolation is contrary to desolation, in the same way the thoughts that come from consolation are contrary to the thoughts that come from desolation.

Rule 5: The fifth: in time of desolation never make a change, but be firm and constant in the proposals and determination in which one was in the day preceding such desolation, or in the determination in which one was in the preceding consolation. Because, as in consolation the good spirit guides and counsels us more, so in desolation the bad spirit, with whose counsels we cannot find the way to a right decision.

Rule 6: The sixth: although in desolation we should not change our first proposals, it is very advantageous to change ourselves intensely against the desolation itself, as by insisting more upon Lectio Divina and other prayer, meditation, upon much examination, and upon extending ourselves in some suitable way of doing penance.

Rule 7: The seventh in desolation consider how the Lord has left earthly trials to our natural powers, so that we may resist the various agitations and temptations of the enemy; since we can resist with the divine help, which always remains with us, though we do not clearly feel it; for the Lord has taken away from his great fervor, abundant love, and intense grace, leaving us, however, sufficient grace for eternal salvation.

Rule 8: The eighth: let the one who is in desolation work to have patience, which is contrary to the vexations which come, and let one think that one will soon be consoled, diligently using the means against such desolation, as is said in the sixth rule.

Rule 9: The ninth: there are three principal causes for which we find ourselves desolate:

- The first is because we are tepid, slothful, or negligent in our spiritual exercises, and so through our faults spiritual consolation withdraws from us.
- The second, to try us and see how much we are and how much we extend ourselves in his service and praise without so much payment of consolations and increased graces.
- The third, to give us true recognition and understanding so that we may interiorly feel that it is not ours to attain or maintain increased devotion, intense love, tears or any other spiritual consolation, but that all is the gift and grace of God our Lord, and so that we may not build a nest in something belonging to another, raising our mind in some pride or vainglory, attributing to ourselves the devotion or the other parts of the spiritual consolation.

Rule 10: The tenth: let the one who is in consolation think how he will conduct himself in the desolation which will come after, taking new strength for that time.

Rule 11: The eleventh: let one who is consoled seek to be humbled and lowered as much as possible, thinking of how little one is capable in the time of desolation without such grace or consolation. On the contrary, let one who is in desolation think that they can do much with God's sufficient grace to resist all their enemies, taking strength in our Creator and Lord.

Rule 12: The twelfth: The enemy acts like a person who is weak when faced with strength and strong when faced with weakness. For, as it is proper for a weak person, when fighting with another, to lose heart and to flee when confronted firmly, and, on the contrary, if the strong one begins to flee, losing heart, the anger, vengeance, and ferocity of the weak one grow greatly and know no bounds, in the same way, it is proper to the enemy to weaken and lose heart, fleeing and ceasing his temptations when the person who is exercised in spiritual things confronts the temptations of the enemy firmly, doing

what is diametrically opposed; and, on the contrary, of the person who is exercising oneself begins to be afraid and lose heart in suffering the temptations, there is no beast so fierce on the face of the earth as the enemy of human nature in following out his damnable intention with such growing malice.

Rule 13: The thirteenth: likewise one conducts oneself as a false lover who wishes to keep a dark secret. For a dissolute person who, speaking with evil intentions, makes dishonorable advances to a child of the Good Father, hides in darkness one's words and persuasions so as to be kept secret, even knowing this deception displeases the Good Father very much. But when the child confesses to the Good Father these false words and depraved intention, the child finally perceives the failure that would otherwise follow such dark undertaking. In the same way, when the enemy of human nature brings his wiles and persuasions to the just soul, he wishes and desires that they be received and kept in secret, but when that child reveals them to one's good confessor or to another spiritual person, who knows the deceits and malicious design of the evil one, it weighs heavily on that child's conscience. Then the evil one flees because he perceives that he will not be able to succeed with the malicious undertaking he has begun, since his manifest deceits have been revealed.

Rule 14: The fourteenth: likewise the evil one conducts himself as a leader, intent upon conquering and robbing what he desires. For, just as a captain and leader of an army in the field, pitching his camp and exploring the fortifications and defenses of a stronghold, attacks it at the weakest point, in the same way the enemy of human nature, roving about, looks in turn at all our theological, cardinal, and moral virtues: and where he finds us weakest and most in need for our eternal salvation, there he attacks and attempts to take us.

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