**14 Rules of Discernment of St. Ignatius in St. Ignatius’ Words and Contemporary Language**

**The First Rule**

St. Ignatius*: In the persons who go from mortal sin to mortal sin, the enemy is commonly used to propose to them apparent pleasures, making them 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 the opposite method, pricking them and biting their consciences through the process of reason.*

Contemporary Language: The enemy proposes certain false delights, causing us to imagine sensual pleasures and enjoyments, the better to keep us on our sinful course. The good spirit deals with us in the opposite way, working on our consciences by reason, to move us to compunction and remorse.

**The Second Rule**

St. Ignatius*: In the persons who are going on intensely cleansing their sins and rising from good to better in the service of God our Lord, it is the method contrary to that in the first Rule, for then it is the way of the evil spirit to bite, sadden and put obstacles, disquieting with false reasons, that one may not go on; and it is proper to the good to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and quiet, easing, and putting away all obstacles, that one may go on in well doing.*

Contemporary Language: The opposite is true when we are making earnest progress in self-purification, rising from good to better in the service of God our Lord.  In these cases it is typical of the evil spirit to cause regret and sadness, using fallacious arguments to disturb us and impede our progress.  On the other hand, the role of the good spirit is to provide courage and strength, to console and inspire, to move to tears, all in a spirit of peace.  Everything is made easy; all obstacles are removed, to enable the soul to continue in virtue.

**The Third Rule**

St. Ignatius*: Of Spiritual Consolation. I call it consolation when some interior movement in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord; and when it can in consequence love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but 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 connected with His service and praise. Finally, I call consolation every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy which 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.*

Contemporary Language: Spiritual comfort or consolation is the name I give to any interior movement experienced by the soul, causing it to glow with love for its Creator and Lord, so that it can no longer love any earthly creature in itself, but only in the Creator of them all. The name also applies to the shedding of tears leading to love of God, either out of sorrow for sin or for the sufferings of Christ our Lord, or for other reasons directly concerned with His service and praise. Lastly, consolation is the name given to any growth in faith, hope, or charity, or to any inward joy which summons or draws people to the things of the next world, to the saving of their soul, bringing the soul to peace and tranquility in its Creator the Lord.

**The Fourth Rule**

St. Ignatius*: Of Spiritual Desolation. I call desolation all the contrary of the third rule, such as darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to things low and earthly, the unquiet of different agitations and temptations, moving to want of confidence, without hope, without love, when one finds oneself all lazy, tepid, sad, and as if separated from his Creator and Lord. Because, as consolation is contrary to desolation, in the same way the thoughts which come from consolation are contrary to the thoughts which come from desolation.*

Contemporary Language: Spiritual distress or desolation is the name I give to whatever is opposite of consolation– darkness of soul, disquiet of mind, an attraction to what is coarse and earthly, all restlessness proceeding from different temptations and disturbances. The temptations tend to destroy or diminish faith, hope, and charity; the soul finds itself listless, apathetic, melancholic, as one cut off from its Creator and Lord. Thoughts that come from consolation are opposite of the thoughts coming from desolation.

**The Fifth Rule**

St. Ignatius*: In time of desolation never to make a change; but to be firm and constant in the resolutions and determination in which one was the day preceding such desolation, or in the determination in which he was in the preceding consolation. Because, as in consolation it is rather the good spirit who guides and counsels us, so in desolation it is the bad, with whose counsels we cannot take a course to decide rightly***.**

Contemporary Language: In a period of distress we are not to change anything! Rather we should remain firm and unyielding in our resolutions and decisions that we made when we were in a state of consolation. For in times of comfort it is the good spirit that guides us by his counsel, whereas in distress it is the evil spirit. The evil spirit’s counsel will never bring us to a right decision.

**The Sixth Rule**

St. Ignatius:*Although in desolation we ought not to change our first resolutions, it is very helpful intensely to change ourselves against the same desolation, as by insisting more on prayer, meditation, on much examination, and by giving ourselves more scope in some suitable way of doing penance.*

Contemporary Language: Though in principle we should not change our previous resolutions and decisions when we are in periods of distress, it is of great value to strive to oppose the distress – for example, by more insistence on prayer, meditation, close examination, and by making an effort to practice some appropriate penance.

**The Seventh Rule**

St. Ignatius*: Let him who is in desolation consider how the Lord has left him in trial in his natural powers, in order to resist the different agitations and temptations of the enemy; since he can with the Divine help, which always remains to him, though he does not clearly perceive it: because the Lord has taken from him his great fervor, great love and intense grace, leaving him, however, grace enough for eternal salvation.*

Contemporary Language: When in distress, we should reflect that God is testing us by leaving us to our own resources in our struggle against the different assaults of the enemy. We can succeed with the help of God, which is always there, even though we are not clearly aware of it. God has indeed withdrawn any great warmth of feeling, intensity of love and extraordinary grace, but He has left grace enough for our eternal salvation.

**The Eighth Rule**

St. Ignatius*: Let him who is in desolation labor to be in patience, which is contrary to the vexations which come to him: and let him think that he will soon be consoled, employing against the desolation the devices, as is said in the sixth Rule.*

Contemporary Language: In this state we should also strive to be patient, which is the antidote to the trials that beset us. We should also reflect that we will ‘soon’ be comforted, and should put forth all his efforts against the distress we are feeling, as described in the sixth rule.

**The Ninth Rule**

St. Ignatius*: There are three principal reasons why we find ourselves desolate.*

1) *The first is, because of our being tepid, lazy or negligent in our spiritual exercises; and so through our faults, spiritual consolation withdraws from us.*

2) *The second, to try us and see how much we are and how much we let ourselves out in His service and praise without such great pay of consolation and great graces.*

*3) The third, to give us true acquaintance and knowledge, that we may interiorly feel that it is not ours to get or keep great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation, but that all is the gift and grace of God our Lord, and that we may not build a nest in a thing not ours, raising our intellect into some pride or vainglory, attributing to us devotion or the other things of the spiritual consolation.*

Contemporary Language: There are three chief reasons why we experience distress: (1) Because we are listless, apathetic and careless in our spiritual practices; it is on account of our faults that our spiritual comfort is withdrawn; (2) To test our worth, and to show how far we are able to advance in His service and praise without that great reward of comforts and extraordinary favors; (3) To give us clear understanding and insight, to enable us to have a deep inner conviction that alone we are powerless to produce or sustain a flood of devout feelings, intense love, tears or any other spiritual comfort, but that this is all a gift of God our Lord.  We are not to become proud and boastful, claiming as our own this devout feeling or other features of spiritual consolation.

**The Tenth Rule**

St. Ignatius*: Let him who is in consolation think how he will be in the desolation which will come after, taking new strength for then.*

Contemporary Language: In a period of comfort, we should think about our conduct in the distress that will ensue, building up our strength in preparation for that experience.

**The Eleventh Rule**

St. Ignatius*: Let him who is consoled see to humbling himself and lowering himself as much as he can, thinking how little he is able for in the time of desolation without such grace or consolation. On the contrary, let him who is in desolation think that he can do much with the grace sufficient to resist all his enemies, taking strength in his Creator and Lord.*

Contemporary Language: When experiencing this comfort, we should be careful to keep ourselves humble and modest, recalling how worthless we are in times of distress, when we are without the favor of this comfort. On the contrary, when we are in a state of distress, we should reflect that we can do a great deal with the grace that is sufficient to withstand all God’s enemies, finding strength in his Creator and Lord.

**The Twelfth Rule**

*St. Ignatius: The enemy acts like a woman, in being weak against vigor and strong of will. Because, as it is the way of the woman when she is quarrelling with some man to lose heart, taking flight when the man shows her much courage: and on the contrary, if the man, losing heart, begins to fly, the wrath, revenge, and ferocity of the woman is very great, and so without bounds; in the same manner, it is the way of the enemy to weaken and lose heart, his temptations taking flight, when the person who is exercising himself in spiritual things opposes a bold front against the temptations of the enemy, doing diametrically the opposite. And on the contrary, if the person who is exercising himself commences to have fear and lose heart in suffering the temptations, there is no beast so wild on the face of the earth as the enemy of human nature in following out his damnable intention with so great malice.*

Contemporary Language: It is typical of the enemy to collapse and lose heart when we train ourselves in spirituality and face up to the enemy’s assaults, doing the precise opposite to what the enemy suggests. On the other hand, if we begin to feel panic and lose heart at these assaults, there is no animal on earth as savage as the enemy of our human nature, in the ever-growing malice with which he carries out his evil plan.

**The Thirteenth Rule**

*St. Ignatius: Likewise, he acts as a licentious lover in wanting to be secret and not revealed. For, as the licentious man who, speaking for an evil purpose, solicits a daughter of a good father or a wife of a good husband, wants his words and persuasions to be secret, and the contrary displeases him much, when the daughter reveals to her father or the wife to her husband his licentious words and depraved intention, because he easily gathers that he will not be able to succeed with the undertaking begun: in the same way, when the enemy of human nature brings his wiles and persuasions to the just soul, he wants and desires that they be received and kept in secret; but when one reveals them to his good Confessor or to another spiritual person that knows his deceits and evil ends, it is very grievous to him, because he gathers, from his manifest deceits being discovered, that he will not be able to succeed with his wickedness begun.*

Contemporary Language: Spill Your Guts!!! The enemy is also like a seducer in his desire to remain disguised and undetected. When the enemy introduces his lying suggestions into a faithful a soul, he is very far from pleased when we disclose these lies to a good confessor or someone else versed in spiritual matters, who is acquainted with the ill-disposed designs of the tempter. The enemy then realizes that his wicked attempts have failed, once his obvious tricks are revealed. Thus, when in doubt about whether a particular matter should be presented to the confessor or other spiritual person, spill you guts! Always err on the side of safety. You lose nothing by speaking up, and gain grace by obeying God’s will to open up. And you may save your soul a great deal of grief by uncovering the tricks of the enemy. But if you do NOT open up, you may lose quite a lot!!

**The Fourteenth Rule**

*St. Ignatius: Likewise, he behaves as a chief bent on conquering and robbing what he desires: for, as a captain and chief of the army, pitching his camp, and looking at the forces or defenses of a stronghold, attacks it on the weakest side, in like manner the enemy of human nature, roaming about, looks in turn at all our virtues, theological, cardinal and moral; and where he finds us weakest and most in need for our eternal salvation, there he attacks us and aims at taking us.*

Contemporary Language: The enemy also acts like a military commander in his attempts to overcome and seize the object he has set his heart on: our soul!  An officer in command of an army takes up a position, and makes a reconnaissance to discover the strength and disposition of troops in a fortified post, and launches his attacks on the weakest point.  Similarly, the enemy of our human natures makes a tour of inspection on our virtues – theological, cardinal, and moral.  Where he finds us weakest in what pertains to our salvation, he attacks at that point, seeking to overthrow us.