

## Advent Lecture #2 - Prayer and Discernment

**St. Ignatius of Loyola** - (1491-1556)

Spanish soldier turned priest. Founder of the Society of Jesus. Author of the Spiritual Exercises (based on his conversion experience)

**Spiritual Exercises** - 30 day retreat, composed of 4 weeks corresponding to 4 movements towards union with God.

**Discernment of Spirits** - who is speaking to me? Making decisions, following the Spirit of God.

**Consolations** - positive feelings, good mood.      **Desolations** - negative feelings, bad mood.

### Examine Prayer

CONSOLATION	DESOLATION
1. Identify moment with a strong change in mood	1. Identify moment with a strong change in mood
2. What happened? When did it start?	2. What happened? When did it start?
3. What caused this to happen? External Cause	3. What caused this to happen? External Cause
4. Why did I respond in this way? Internal Cause	4. Why did I respond in this way? Internal Cause
5. Give glory to God for your CONSOLATION	5. Identify Selfish Desire!
6. Give Thanks. Renew your love for God.	6. What should my desire be? God given desire.
	7. Replace your selfish desire with God's desire.
	8. Ask the Holy Spirit to come.

### Discursive Meditation - steps

1. Stand at a distance from the place of prayer. Prepare by recognizing what is about it take place.
2. Take your position in prayer. Become aware of the presence of God. Enter into that presence.
3. Read the passage from Sacred Scripture one time.
4. Enter into the scene of the passage. Become one of the characters from the passage.
5. Begin to engage your senses: what do you see, hear, feel, etc.
6. Listen attentively to what is being said. Re-read the passage.
7. What are you hearing? Is there anything that is being said to you? What would you like to hear?
8. Speak to the characters in the scene. What do you want to tell them? What would you like them to hear?
9. Pray to Jesus, what is it that you would like to ask for in this moment? What is it that you think you should ask for?
10. Make an offering to Jesus. What is it that you would like Jesus to receive from you? What would you like to offer Him?
11. Make one concrete resolution, practical way you can make an offering to Jesus.
12. Finish by reading the passage one more time. Highlight words that were very important. Make a note of your resolution. What did you learn? What did you hear? What did you offer?

## Summary of the Rules for Discernment for week 1

**First Rule:** For a person living in sin movement towards God is painful, and movement towards the enemy is pleasant.

**Second Rule:** For a person living in grace movement towards God is pleasant, and movement towards the enemy is painful.

**Third Rule:** A positive interior movement in a soul is a movement towards God (e.g. inflamed with love for God, tears of joy, sorrow for sins, increase of faith, hope, and love, etc.) This is called Consolation.

**Fourth Rule:** A negative interior movement in a soul is a movement away from God (e.g. darkness of soul, disturbance in it, loss of faith, hope, and love, sadness, etc.) This is called Desolation.

**Fifth Rule:** In Desolation never make a change, but continue on the path set out in preceding consolation.

**Sixth Rule:** In Desolation intensify your prayer, meditation, and penance.

**Seventh Rule:** In Desolation remember that the Lord has left you enough grace to persevere.

**Eighth Rule:** In Desolation remain patient, remembering that Consolation will return.

**Ninth Rule:** Remember that there are 3 principle causes of Desolation:

1. When we are slothful in our spiritual life Consolation withdraws from us.
2. When the Lord wants to test our faith by removing positive effects of our life of faith.
3. When the Lord wants to humble us and teach us that our growth in faith is not our doing  
but a pure gift from Him.

**Tenth Rule:** In Consolation remember that Desolation will come and prepare yourself for it by making plans how you will conduct yourself when it comes.

**Eleventh Rule:** In Consolation humble yourself remembering that you can do nothing without God's grace, in Desolation believe that you can do much with God's grace.

**Twelfth Rule:** The evil one is powerful against the weak, and powerless against the strong. So too, confront your temptations firmly and boldly so that the enemy can flee.

**Thirteenth Rule:** Sin grows in the darkness. When in Desolation tell your Spiritual Director everything.

**Fourteenth Rule:** Strengthen your weakest areas, mindful that the enemy attacks us at our weakest points (theological, cardinal, and moral virtues).