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## St ignatius 14 rules of discernment

The Four Foundations of Discernment: Understanding the Rules of Spiritual Growth Father Richard Conlin explores the foundational texts for spiritual growth, highlighting four core rules that serve as the foundation for discerning the movements of the spirits. These rules focus on two primary aspects: the fundamental direction of a person's spiritual life and the "material" or "stuff" of discernment. The first four rules outline the experience of moving away from God (Rule 1) and towards God (Rule 2). Rules 3 and 4 delve into the two basic spiritual movements of the heart, emphasizing the importance of taking action in response to desolation. The next seven rules focus on "taking action," particularly in regards to rejecting desolation. These include practical guidelines for navigating spiritual desolation and finding balance between consolation and desolation. Rules 12-14 shift attention away from desolation and towards the enemy's attacks, emphasizing the need to stand firm, break spiritual silence, and strengthen weak points. Father Conlin stresses that God's strength far surpasses the devil's, and by embracing spiritual weapons and strength, individuals can become warriors rather than victims. A key takeaway is that imperfection in one's efforts is not a reason to give up; rather, it should be viewed as an opportunity to improve and grow. As Fr. Timothy Gallagher notes, living the discerning life imperfectly, with occasional lapses of awareness, struggles to understand, and failures to take action, is still worth doing. Based on St. Ignatius' 14 Rules for Discernment of Spirits, it's essential to acknowledge spiritual influences in daily life. These rules encourage us to recognize the difference between consolation (movement towards God) and desolation (movement away from God). This awareness allows us to respond appropriately to our spiritual state. For example, when we're experiencing consolations, we can deepen our relationship with God by engaging in spiritual practices. Conversely, if we encounter desolations, it's crucial to reject them and seek help from a spiritual director or community. As I've personally discovered through attending retreats like the one led by Fr. Timothy Gallagher, St. Ignatius' rules offer practical guidance for integrating spiritual principles into everyday life. By understanding these rules, you can develop a deeper awareness of your spiritual state and make informed decisions to foster growth in holiness. In this series, we'll explore specific rules that have significantly impacted my life, including the second, fifth, and thirteenth. Keep in mind that there are multiple translations of the rules; Fr. Timothy Gallagher's version is used here. According to the second rule, individuals striving for holiness must recognize the evil spirit's tactics: creating obstacles, disquieting with false reasons, and hindering progress towards a closer relationship with God. In contrast, the good spirit offers courage, strength, consolations, and guidance to facilitate growth in holiness. By grasping these principles and applying them in our lives, we can navigate spiritual challenges more effectively and deepen our connection with God. The Holy Spirit and good forces work for our benefit, while the evil spirit uses his tactics against us, "that one may not go on," contrary to the good spirit's aim, "that one may go on in well-doing." These rules serve as a compass, guiding us towards positive actions. I once fell into this trap, believing that enduring sufferings was what God wanted, and I would stop moving when feeling spiritual sadness or obstacles, thinking it was part of Catholic life. However, the second rule revealed that God doesn't want us to stay in darkness; He wants us to actively work through difficulties with His help. This changed my perspective on tough moments and inspired me to take action against spiritual suffering. The third rule advises not to change a decision made during consolation when experiencing desolation, as it's the bad spirit influencing our thoughts. Recognizing where we are in terms of consolation or desolation can be a powerful tool for making decisions. For instance, I know that feeling dejected before prayer is a tactic by the enemy, and knowing this helps me firmly resolve to stick with my plan for prayer. This happens often, especially when trying to make it to daily Mass or pray the Rosary. The fifth rule reminds us of the importance of perseverance in these moments, ensuring we don't give up but rather continue on our path despite difficulties. To remain steadfast in my faith, I've never regretted following this path, just like an immoral suitor who seeks secrecy for his deceitful intentions, only to become enraged when exposed by those he's deceived. Similarly, the enemy of our souls desires that his insidious whispers be kept hidden from the spiritual guardians who can detect his true nature. But when we reveal these temptations, the enemy is left frustrated, as he knows he'll fail in his wicked endeavors. For me, Rule 13 has been both a blessing and a challenge, as it encourages open sharing of our struggles, which I've found difficult to do. However, I've come to realize that everyone faces temptation, even Jesus, who was tested like us in every way (Heb 4:15). The enemy's aim is to instill shame, making us reluctant to discuss our temptations; but it's essential to remember that being tempted doesn't make us weak or sinful - it's the enemy's doing. We're only accountable for how we respond to these challenges. By keeping our struggles hidden, the enemy can continue to wear us down, but by sharing them with a trusted confidant, we disarm him and prevent his manipulation. This principle applies not just to spiritual growth but also to other areas of life, like recovery from addiction. When we bring our temptations into the light, we're healed (Psalm 36). It's crucial to have someone we can be honest with, who's spiritually mature and trustworthy, so that when we're under attack, we can seek their guidance and support. (Note: I've kept the original text language and paraphrased it without making any significant changes) for us! Image: Photo by christopher lemercier on Unsplash Ignatius Loyola developed a framework for discerning spirits, which he presented in two sets of rules within the Spiritual Exercises. These rules aim to help individuals navigate various emotional states that arise during spiritual growth, such as consolation and desolation. The first set consists of 14 rules, offering practical advice for dealing with desolation and identifying the spiritual forces at play (Spiritual Exercises, 313-327). This set is intended for those embarking on a serious spiritual journey. The second set features eight rules, focusing on spiritual consolation (Spiritual Exercises, 328-336), designed for individuals already established in their spiritual life. Ignatius emphasizes the importance of imagination, teaching that Jesus wants to fill all aspects of our being through our faculties and senses. He encourages us to engage with Gospel passages as if they were happening now, using our imaginations to construct scenes and experience being there with Christ. This contemplative practice involves two methods: 'composition of place' (SE 47) and 'application of senses' (SE 67-70). The use of active imagination in Gospel Contemplation involves guiding oneself through a particular event in Jesus' life. The person at prayer focuses on the story, keeping their mind within the biblical framework and avoiding distractions. This technique incorporates images, feelings, and thoughts, with St. Ignatius suggesting three steps: Seeing, Listening, and Considering. St. Ignatius advises to: \* See the different persons in the scene (e.g. Jesus' disciples) \* Listen to what they are saying \* Consider their actions and feelings This contemplation is a kinesthetic exercise that aims to create a deeper connection with God's presence. The "Application of the Senses" technique involves applying each sense successively to the scenes of Christ's life, such as smelling divinity, tasting virtues, and touching places. The Spiritual Exercises emphasize the importance of prayer and self-reflection, encouraging individuals to draw spiritual fruit from their experiences. By engaging in this practice, one can develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their relationship with God. Here is the rewritten text: in content and time. Daily Time Commitment Be available for one hour of prayer daily, including Evening Examen, Next Day's Preparation, Morning Prayer Exercise, and Reflective Journaling. You will receive all necessary tools for this virtual journey into the heart of Jesus. Weekly Sessions with your Director Review your graces, consolations, and desolations before meeting with your chosen Director, usually weekly but possibly missed due to holidays or illness. Welcome Our Lady of the Way, pray for us! www.OurLadyoftheWay.org www.IgnatianRetreats.org Domina Nostra Viae 501(c)(3) Apostolate Ministry EIN 92-4019758

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