

Rules for Discernment In the First Week

Rules to help persons get in touch with and understand in some manner the diverse motions which are prompted within them, so that they may receive the good ones and expel the evil ones. These rules are more appropriate to the First Week.

1. In the case of those persons who go from mortal sin to mortal sin, the customary tactic of the enemy is to put before them illusory gratifications, prompting them to imagine sensual delights and pleasures, the better to hold them and make them grow in their vices and sins. With such persons, the good spirit employs a contrary tactic, through their rational power of moral judgment causing pain and remorse in their consciences.
2. As for those persons who are intensely concerned with purging away their sins and ascending from good to better in the service of God our Lord, the mode of acting on them is contrary to that (described) in the first rule. For them it is connatural to the evil spirit to gnaw at them, to sadden them, to thrust obstacles in their way, disquieting them with false reasons for the sake of impeding their progress. It is connatural to the good spirit to give courage and active energy, consolations, tears, inspirations and a quiet mind, giving ease of action and taking away obstacles for the sake of progress in doing good.
3. Concerning spiritual consolation. I name it (spiritual) consolation when some inner motion is prompted in the person, of such a kind that he begins to be aflame with love of his Creator and Lord, and, consequently, when he cannot love any created thing on the face of the earth in itself but only in the Creator of them all. Likewise (I call it consolation) when a person pours out tears moving to love of his Lord, whether it be for sorrow over his sins, or over the passion of Christ our Lord, or over other things directly ordered to his service and praise. Finally, I call (spiritual) consolation every increase of hope, faith, and charity, and every inward gladness which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to one's personal salvation, bringing repose and peace in his Creator and Lord.
4. Concerning spiritual desolation. I call (spiritual) desolation everything the contrary of (what is described in) the third rule, for example, gloominess of soul, confusion, a movement of contemptible and earthly things, disquiet from various commotions and temptations, (all this) tending toward distrust, without hope, without love; finding oneself thoroughly indolent, tepid, sad, and as if separated from one's Creator and Lord. For just as (spiritual) consolation is contrary to (spiritual) desolation, in the same way the thoughts which spring from (spiritual) consolation are contrary to the thoughts which spring from (spiritual) desolation.
5. The time of (spiritual) desolation is no time at all to change purposes and decisions with which one was content the day before such desolation, or the decision with which one was content during the previous consolation. It is, rather, a time to remain firm and constant in these. For just as in (spiritual)

consolation the good spirit generally leads and counsels us, so in (spiritual) desolation does the evil spirit. By the latter's counsels we cannot find the way to a right decision.

6. Granted that in (spiritual) desolation we ought not to change our previous purposes, it helps greatly to change ourselves intensely in ways contrary to the aforesaid desolation, for instance, by insisting more on prayer, on meditation, on much examination, and on extending ourselves to do penance in some fitting manner.
7. Let one who is in (spiritual) desolation consider how the Lord has left him to his natural powers, so that he may prove himself while resisting the disturbances and temptations of the enemy. He is, indeed, able to do so with the divine aid, which always remains with him even though he does not clearly perceive it. For, although the Lord has withdrawn from him his bubbling ardor, surging love, and intense grace, nevertheless, he leaves enough grace to go on toward eternal salvation.
8. Let him who is in (spiritual) desolation work at holding on in patience, which goes contrary to the harassments that come on him; and, while taking unremitting action against such desolation, as said in the sixth rule, let him keep in mind that he will soon be consoled.

Rules for Discernment In the Second Week

1. It is connatural for God and his angels, when they prompt interior motions, to give genuine gladness and spiritual joy, eliminating all sadness and confusion which the enemy brings on. It is connatural for the latter to fight against such gladness and spiritual consolation by proposing specious arguments, subtle and persistently fallacious.
2. To give a person consolation without preceding cause is for God our Lord alone to do; for it is distinctive to the Creator in relation to the created person to come in and leave, to move the person interiorly, drawing him or her totally into love of his Divine Majesty. I say without (preceding) cause, that is, without any previous perception or understanding of any object such that through it consolation of this sort would come by the mediation of the person's own acts of understanding and will.
3. With a (preceding) cause, an angel, good or evil, can console a person. In doing so, the good and evil angels have contrary purposes. The purposes of the good angel is the person's progress, that he may ascend from good to better. The purpose of the evil angel is the contrary – and thereafter, to draw the person on to his damned intent and cunning trap.
4. It is characteristic of the evil spirit to take on the appearance of angel of light, so that he can begin by going the way of a devout person and end with that person going his own way. By that I mean that he first prompts thoughts which are good and holy, harmonious with such a faithful person, and then manages, little by little, to step out of his act and lead the person to his hidden falsehoods and perverse designs.

5. We ought to pay close attention to the progression of thoughts. If the beginning, middle, and end of it are altogether good and tend entirely to what is right, that is a sign of a good angel's influence. It is, however, a clear sign that the line of thought originates from the influence of the evil spirit, the enemy of our spiritual growth and progress and eternal salvation, if the thoughts which he prompts end up in something evil or distracting or less good than what the person had previously proposed to do, or if they weaken, disquiet, or confuse him, doing away with the peace, tranquility, and quiet experienced beforehand.
6. When the enemy of human nature has been perceived and recognized by his telltale train of thoughts terminating in the evil to which he leads, it is useful for the person who was tempted by him to look immediately at the course of good thoughts which were prompted in him, noting how they began and how, little by little, the evil spirit contrived to make him fall away from the earlier sweetness and spiritual joy until he led him to what his (the spirit's) own corrupt mind intended. The purpose is that observing such an experience and taking mental note of it will be a safeguard for the future against these customary hoaxes of the evil spirit.
7. Persons who are going from good to better the good angel touches sweetly, lightly, gently, as when a drop of water soaks into a sponge, while the evil spirit touches them sharply, with noise and disturbance, as when the drop of water falls on a rock. Those who are going from bad to worse the aforesaid spirits touch in a way contrary to the way they touch those going from good to better. The cause of this contrariety is that the disposition of the one touched is either contrary to or concordant with each of the said angels. For when it is contrary, the angels enter perceptibly, with clamor and observable signs; when it is concordant, they come in quietly, as one comes into his own house through an open door.
8. Granted that when consolation is without (preceding) cause, it has no deception in it, since, as has been said, such consolation is from God our Lord alone; nevertheless, a spiritual person to whom God gives such consolation should, with great alertness and attention, examine his experience to discern the precise time of the actual consolation (without preceding cause) as distinct from the following time, in which the person is still glowing and still graced by the residue of (actual) consolation that is now over with. The reason for making this distinction is that frequently in this second period, either through one's own reasoning about the relations of concepts and judgments and the conclusions to be drawn from them or through the influence of a good spirit or of an evil spirit, various purposes and opinions take shape which are not given immediately by God our Lord. Inasmuch as that is the case, these purposes and opinions are in need of prolonged and careful examination before full assent is given to them or they are put into execution.
9. There are three principal causes which explain why we find ourselves (spiritually) desolate. The first is that we are tepid, indolent, or negligent in our spiritual exercises; and, as a result of our failings (spiritual) consolation

departs from us. The second is that it serves to put our worth to the test, showing how much we will extend ourselves in serving and praising God without so much pay in consolations and increased graces. The third is this: spiritual desolation serves to give us a true recognition and understanding, grounding in an inward experiential perception of the fact that we cannot ourselves attain to or maintain surging devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation, but rather that all is gift and grace from God our Lord. So, we do not build a nest on another's property, elevating our mind in a certain pride or vainglory, giving ourselves credit for devotion or other constituents of spiritual consolation.

10. Let him who is in consolation think how he will bear himself in the desolation which will follow, gathering energy anew for that time.
11. Let him who is (spiritually) consoled set about humbling and lowering himself as much as he can, reflecting on how pusillanimous he is in the time of (spiritual) desolation without God's grace or consolation. On the other hand, let him who is in (spiritual) desolation keep in mind that, drawing strength from his Creator and Lord, he has with divine grace sufficiently great power to resist all his enemies.
12. The enemy acts like a shrewish woman, being weak and willful; for it is connatural to such a woman in a quarrel with some man to back off when he boldly confronts her; and on the contrary when losing courage, he begins to retreat, the anger, vengeance, and ferocity of the woman swell beyond measure. In like manner, it is connatural to the enemy to fall back and lose courage, with his temptations fading out, when the person performing spiritual exercises presents a bold front against the temptations of the enemy, by doing what is diametrically the opposite. If, on the contrary, the person engaged in spiritual exercises begins to be fearful and to lose courage while suffering temptations, there is no beast on the face of the earth so fierce as is the enemy of humankind in prosecuting his wicked intention with such swelling malice.