

ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA'S RULES FOR SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

Taken from his Spiritual Exercises, Sections [313]-[336]

Preliminary Matters (313)

These rules are for perceiving and knowing *in some manner* the different movements that are caused in the SOUL

THE GOOD: to receive them

THE BAD: to reject them

A) The Way of the Spirits

1. **First Rule (314)** In persons going from serious sin to serious sin: (*maybe only in even one aspect of their lives*)

EVIL SPIRIT

Uses apparent pleasures and sensual conscience.
delight to hold them more and make them grow more in their vices and sins.

GOOD SPIRIT

through reason pricks and bites their

2. **Second Rule (315)** In persons intensely cleansing their sins, going from good to better in serving God, **IT IS JUST THE OPPOSITE OF THE FIRST RULE:**

EVIL SPIRIT

Bites
Saddens
Puts up obstacles
Uses false reasons

GOOD SPIRIT

GIVES: courage
strength
consolation
tears
inspiration
quiet easing

--**THAT ONE MAY NOT GO ON**

--**THAT ONE MAY GO ON**

B) Consolation

1. Third Rule (316)

Consolation (an interior movement):

- a. The person is inflamed with the love of God AND LOVES GOD IN ANYONE OR ANYTHING HE/SHE LOVES
- b. Tears that move the person to the love of God, whether
 - out of sorrow for sins; or
 - from thoughts of Jesus' passion; or
 - connected with other things intimately related to praising and serving God
- c. Every increase:
 - in faith, hope, or love
 - in interior joy
 - that attract the person to God
 - that quiets or gives peace

It is easier for the GOOD SPIRIT to guide us in times of consolation.

C) Desolation

1. Fourth Rule (317)

Desolation is:

- Darkness or disturbance of the soul
- movements to things low and earthly
- unquiet and different agitations and temptations
- movements towards lack of confidence
- lack of hope, lack of love
- when one finds oneself lazy, sad, and tepid (as if separated from God)

The thoughts that come from desolation are different than the thoughts that come from consolation.

It is easier for the EVIL SPIRIT to guide us in times of desolation

The person in consolation/desolation should:

CONSOLATION:

humble himself/ herself
and think about how much
he/she needs consolation to get
through the times of desolation

DESOLATION:

think that he/she can move
out of desolation with the help
of God's consolation

2. **Fifth Rule (318)**

A person in desolation should NOT change a resolution or determination he/she made in consolation. (St. Ignatius refers here primarily to resolutions or determinations regarding the spiritual life.)

Why? Because of our weakened state, it is easy for the evil spirit to guide and counsel us when we are in desolation. (Just as when we are in consolation, it is easy for the good spirit to counsel us.)

3. **Sixth Rule (319)**

A person can fight desolation with:

- more prayer and meditation (*especially prayers of petition*)
- more examination
- some suitable penance

4. **Seventh Rule (320)**

A person in desolation should consider how God has left him/her in a type of TRIAL with just his/her natural powers.

- God is still there, although it is more difficult for the person to perceive God.
- God has taken from the person great fervor, great love, and intense grace.

5. **Eighth Rule (321)**

Persons in desolation should:

- have patience (*which is contrary to the agitations of the desolation*)
- think that he/she will be consoled (*and apply the means of the Sixth Rule*)

6. **Ninth Rule (322)**

There are three reasons for desolation:

- a. a person's own laziness or negligence in making spiritual exercises.
- b. It is a type of trial to see how much the person is in God's service for God, or if the person is only making the spiritual exercises just for God's Gifts (*as St. Teresa of Avila put it, Are we seeking the God of consolations or the consolations of God?*)
- c. To give us true knowledge (*which only comes from personal experience*) that all spiritual consolation is the gift and grace of God.

7. **Tenth Rule (323)**

The person in consolation should consider how he/she will act in future desolation, and store up new strength for that time.

8. **Eleventh Rule (315)**

The person in desolation should think that he/she can move out of desolation with the help of God and God's consolation.

D) **THREE WAYS THE EVIL SPIRIT WORKS**

1. **Twelfth Rule (325)**

The EVIL SPIRIT acts like a WEAK-WILLED WOMAN (*we have to excuse St. Ignatius here for singling out women. One could also say, like a spoiled child*)

- he is weak against strength, courage and vigor
- when people are timid or lose heart, the evil spirit takes advantage

So **BE BOLD** against the evil spirit.

2. **Thirteenth Rule (326)**

The EVIL SPIRIT acts like a FALSE LOVER (*or one could say, child molester*), who wants his liaisons to be kept secret and not revealed.

When the secret intentions are revealed, the evil one slinks away.

So SHARE your sins and struggles with a safe confidant or group, or REVEAL (in a safe manner) when an injustice has been committed against you, so the offender is less likely to continue his/her behavior.

3. **Fourteenth Rule (327)**

The EVIL SPIRIT acts like an ARMY COMMANDER who scouts out the enemy's defenses, so he can attack on the weakest side.

So **KNOW** how the evil spirit works and **BE PREPARED**.