

All for the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary!

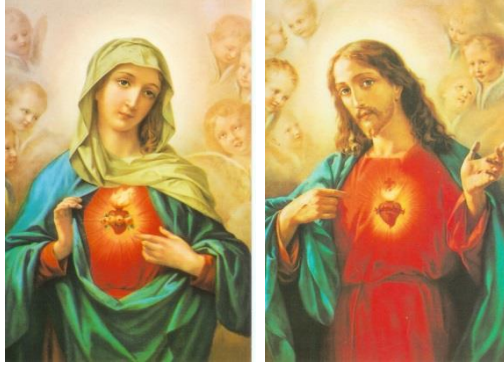


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Index	2
General and Particular Examens	4
General and Particular Examens by Father John A. Hardon, S. J.	4
The Precepts of the Church.....	10
The Ten Commandments	11
Examination of Conscience on the Theological Virtues	11
Discernment of Spirits	16
The Gift of Discernment by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.	17
The Evil Spirit in Conflict with Christ and His Followers by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.	28
Discernment of Spirits by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.	32
Appendix	38
Prayer and Divine Reading (<i>Lectio Divina</i>) by Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke, D.D., J.C.D.	38
What is Spiritual Reading by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.	40
Ignatian Spirituality Today by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.	42
Day 1: The First Principle and Foundation	42
Day 5: The Call of Christ the King	43
Day 9: The Standards of Christ and Lucifer	44
Day 10: Three Classes of People.....	45
Day 19: Three Degrees of Humility	46
Day 19: The Election	47
Lord, Teach Us To Pray by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.	49
<i>The Our Father</i> by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.	57
<i>The Hail Mary</i> by Saint Louis De Montfort	61
Mary’s Unfailing Assistance	61
Prayers Before Spiritual Direction Guide	62
Recommendations for those completing the Exercises by Father John Morris, S.J.	64

Index

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.....	8	Friday penance	10
Attitude of will–readiness to do God’s will (Rule 2).....	32	General and Particular Examens by Father John A. Hardon	4
avoid mortal sin	45	General Examen	4
avoid venial sin	45	Gift of Discernment by Father John A. Hardon	17
Be at peace.....	26	God uses people as channels of His grace to other people.....	43
Be sober, or temperate.....	26	Good Spirit makes goodness possible	18
Cardinal Burke.....	38	<i>Hail Mary</i> by Saint Louis De Montfort.....	61
channels of grace.....	52, 54	heart of Ignatian spirituality. Christ calls everyone to follow Him	43
Charity	13	Holy Days of Obligation.....	10
Come Holy Spirit	9	Hope	12
confess mortal sins	10	<u>How Spiritual Reading is to be Done</u>	41
Confidence and trust in God (Rule 7)	35	How to identify agents of the evil spirit ...	21
Create a Sacred Time for Prayer.....	57	Identify the Antichrists	21
Create Togetherness in Prayer	58	Ignatian Spirituality Today by Father John A. Hardon.....	42
devil commands an army.....	24	<i>Know Thyself</i>	36
devil is a liar	23	laws of the Church concerning marriage ...	10
devil is a murderer.....	24	Lectio Divina	38
devil is a professional accommodator	24	Levels of Malice.....	20
devil is an evil spirit	23	Living as We Pray–Humbly and Putting God First	60
devil is envious	23	Lord, Teach Us To Pray by Father John A. Hardon	49
devil seduces with advertising	25	Mary’s Unfailing Assistance	61
devil seduces with passions	25	Monthly Recollection by Father John A. Hardon	14
devil tells “bad people” that there is no sin	25	No one is spared temptations by the devil	30
devil tells “good people” that the Christian life is burdensome	24	Our capacity to do evil	19
devil tempts us on three levels of body and soul	30	Particular Examen	6
devil uses human government	24	Particular Examen on the Theological Virtues.....	12
Discernment of Spirits.....	16	Peace – the sound of grace (Rule 3).....	34
Discernment of Spirits by Father John A. Hardon	32	Perfection of <i>The Lord’s Prayer</i>	49
Easter Season.....	10	Pray daily to Saint Michael the Archangel	27
<i>Effects of Praying the Examen</i>	5	Pray to Mary, Queen of Martyrs	27
Election.....	42, 45, 46, 47	Prayer and Divine Reading (<i>Lectio Divina</i>) by Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke.....	38
Evil Spirit in Conflict with Christ and His Followers by Father John A. Hardon ...	28	<u>Prayer before Spiritual Reading</u>	41
Examination of Conscience on the Theological Virtues	11	Prayer for Priests	63
expect false teachers to disguise their intentions	22	Prayers Before Spiritual Direction Guide..	62
Expect temptation; depend on grace	26	Precepts of the Church.....	10
Faith.....	12		
fallen human nature.....	30, 42, 45		
Father John Morris, S.J.....	64		

Priorities in Prayer58
recognize God’s voice from the seductions
of the evil one..... 32
Recommendations for those completing the
Exercises 64
Resist the devil with prayer and trust in God
..... 30
Saint Faustina..... 62
Saint Francis de Sales..... 7
Saint John Paul II 8
saints reproduce saints.....41
Sin is a deliberate violation of the law of
God..... 8
Strategy of the Devil in Demonic
Temptations 23
Summary of 14 Rules for Discernment of
Spirits..... 36

Summary of General Examen5
Teach Others How to Pray.....57
Ten Commandments..... 11
The Our Father by Father John A. Hardon57
Three great concupiscences28
Three sources of temptation: world, flesh
and the devil29
Two spirits, two kinds of fruits 18
Vocal Prayer Know What You are Saying 59
watch for humble submission or proud
unwillingness22
watch the conduct of people22
What is Spiritual Reading by Father John A.
Hardon40
Why is Spiritual Reading Necessary?40

General and Particular Examens

General and Particular Examens by Father John A. Hardon, S. J.

Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

Available from The Real Presence website under the title, "Examen of Conscience"

http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Christian_Spirituality/Christian_Spirituality_012.htm

(Italicized sections of text are editor's additions.)

The *Examination of Conscience* is an essential part of the spiritual life. All intelligent people make a periodic self-assessment. Our purpose here is to speak of the daily *EXAMEN of Conscience* which is recommended by all the writers of the spiritual life.

For most people, the *Examination of Conscience* is part of their preparation for their reception of the Sacrament of Penance. However, our focus here is rather on what we technically call the *Examen of Conscience*. This is a daily prayerful reflection on our service of God. There are two basic Examens of Conscience. One is called the *General Examen* and the other the *Particular Examen*.

General Examen

The General Examen, as the name implies, is a general overview of my moral behavior during the past day. We must assume that our conduct has been both praiseworthy and blameworthy. We should also look forward to the next day and prepare ourselves beforehand on how we should do God's will in the immediate future that awaits us.

Saint Ignatius distinguishes certain necessary steps for making the General Examen. These steps flow naturally, from one to the next, as we pray the Examen (allow 5-15 minutes):

1. *Place myself before God; make the Sign of the Cross*
2. *Express gratitude*
3. *Pray for the grace to see my sins*
4. *Examine the day*
5. *Beg God's pardon*
6. *Plan for tomorrow*
7. *Close with an Our Father*

Step One: *Place yourself in the presence of God; make the Sign of the Cross.*

Step Two: *Express gratitude. Give thanks to God Our Lord for the favors received. (Puhl, #43)*

In the presence of God, I should reflect on what blessings the Lord has given me during the past day for which I gratefully thank Him. These blessings may not all have been pleasant. As a matter of fact some may have been painful. No matter. God manifests His will to us, urging us to do what we enjoy. Those we may call pleasant graces.

But God will also ask us to do what we may dislike or refrain from doing something we may like. That is immaterial. The only question is, do I do as God wants me to do or give up something He wants me to give up? Once I know what God wants of me in my life, I *decide* to do it with my mind and *choose* to do it with my will.

The first part of the General Examen of Conscience, therefore, is to thank Our Lord for the graces He has given me, whether pleasant or painful, with which I have faithfully cooperated. For this I thank Him.

Step Three: *Pray for the grace to know my sins and to rid myself of them. (Puhl, #43)*

Step Four: *Examine the day. Demand an account of my soul, from the time of rising to the present examination. I should go over one hour after another, one period after another. The thoughts should be examined first, then the words, and finally, the deeds. (Puhl, #43; explained in detail in Puhl paragraphs 32-42.)*

Next, again in God's presence, I should ask myself where I have failed to cooperate with the grace that God has given me during the day. Most of us have a pattern in our moral behavior. I may have failed in the practice of humility, or prudence, or charity, or patience, and so on down the list of our human weaknesses. Simply assume

that you failed in some way or another in responding to the will of God in your life. Be concrete and specific.

Briefly recall the circumstances which occasioned your moral failure. And then do the obvious thing of asking Our Lord to forgive you and give you the strength not only to avoid this sin in the future but enable you to be more generous in His service as expiation for your past failure.

Step Five: *Beg God's pardon. Ask pardon of God Our Lord for my faults. (Puhl, #43) Pray an Act of Contrition.*

Step Six: *Plan for tomorrow. Resolve to amend with the grace of God. (Puhl, #43)* Finally, plan for the future. Sacred Scripture could not be plainer. The just man anticipates what he will do and is not caught unaware of what God expects of him. This part of the General Examen is indispensable in the spiritual life.

It means that I look forward to what I am to do, and avoid doing, in the next day. It further means that I ask myself, in God's presence, how I should do what my conscience tells me is God's will. It even means that I anticipate how much time I will spend, say in conversation with someone, or on a particular task that lies ahead of me. Clearly this calls for both prudence and prayer.

I must foresee what God expects of me and plan on how I am to fulfill this expectation. But it also, and especially, means that I pray for the light to know what I am to do and how to do it, and for the strength of will which only God can provide to do His will effectively.

A standard dictionary definition of agenda is "a list, outline, or plan of things to be considered or done." For the believing Christian, agendas are the things that God wants me to do.

Our natural tendency is to do first the things that we like, and then the things that are useful, and finally the things that are necessary. We need Divine help to reverse this natural process. That is why....I must daily anticipate God's will for my

next day and ask Him for the grace I will need to do His will instead of following my own.

One brief suggestion is in order. It is a good idea to jot down, however briefly, what I foresee the Lord expects me to do in the next day.

Step Seven: *Close with an Our Father and the following prayer. (Puhl, #43)*

"Dear Lord, I commend to Your Sacred Heart, all the persons throughout the world—priests, religious and laity—who are now making their retreat. Give them light to know Your Divine Will in their state of life, courage to sacrifice what stands between them and Your greater glory, and generosity in responding to Your love, through the merits of St. Ignatius the patron of Spiritual Exercises. Amen" (Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book, p. 260).

Summary of General Examen

The General Examen is really a colloquy, an intimate conversation between two friends, the Lord and you. Just as we transition into and out of our meditation/contemplation prayer time, we also transition into and out of the Examen. We quiet ourselves and begin with an awareness of God's presence, making a bow, the Sign of the Cross or some other bodily gesture. We pray the Examen and then conclude the time of prayer with an Our Father. Saint Ignatius, through his own experience, saw this need of the human person to gently enter and close these personal conversations with specific acts.

The Effects of Praying the Examen

Perseverance in praying the Examen provides a degree of spiritual awareness that leads us to love the Lord more deeply and to understand and respond appropriately to events in our daily lives. By God's grace we become:

- *aware of God's continual gifts to us,*
- *more aware of how God loves us, is with us and pursues us;¹ that His love is steadfast, unconditional, constant and ever ready to forgive,*
- *more aware of how God is working in our lives,*

¹ God has been called the *Hound of Heaven*, constantly reaching out in love to us. The title comes from a poem of

the same name, written by English poet Francis Thompson (1859-1907).

- *more able and ready to hear God's "still small voice"² gently speaking in our hearts,*
- *more thankful to Him,*
- *more trustful of Him,*
- *more desirous to follow His will,*
- *more conscious to resist those actions that turn us away from God,*
- *better able to see where we have failed and to turn and follow His path instead of our own,*
- *better able to discern which promptings are of God and which are not,*
- *better able to recognize patterns and tendencies in our behavior, and inordinate attachments,*
- *more able to calmly and confidently bring our sins to God and ask for forgiveness,*
- *more confident to go forward in the days ahead knowing that the God Who loves us is at our side,*
- *more aware of experiences of spiritual consolation and where the Lord may be leading us through them,*
- *better able to recognize desolation and note our response to it. (Did we identify it, understand its origin and act against it? Or, did it cause us turmoil, heaviness and poor behavior today? Do we still feel it? How can we act against it now and in the future? This examination will help us learn from experiences of desolation.)*

The General Examen opens our eyes and helps us to see God's loving Providence at work, or, as Saint Ignatius says, to "find God in all things." It is helpful to keep a record of the blessings, failings, inordinate attachments recognized, and any experiences of consolation and desolation noted during the General Examen. These notes allow for the prayerful review of our spiritual experiences, helping us to gain more fruit from the past and more clarity for future choices as we prayerfully walk with the Lord.

As we progress in the practice of the General Examen, time spent on particular steps will vary. As Saint Ignatius counsels us in the steps for meditation/contemplation, here too, he counsels

us to stay with a step where we feel the Holy Spirit is drawing us and not proceed until our hearts are satisfied.³ If no such feeling occurs when praying, the steps should simply be prayed in sequence, but always with great attention to the Holy Spirit's call to linger with a particular one.

In addition, as we progress in making the General Examen, we will note that it can be made at varying times during the day, and not only in the evening. During the retreat, the General Examen is to be made in the evening. After the retreat, the best place and time can be determined by each individual. Please discuss any difficulties with the General Examen with your Spiritual Director.

Particular Examen

The *Particular Examen of Conscience* follows logically on the General Examen. All of us have certain tendencies across the whole spectrum of moral misbehavior. Yet no two of us are identical in which of these tendencies is predominant.

Some are more prone to pride than to lust. Some are more prone to anger than to greed. Some are more prone to envy than to sloth. In fact, each one of us changes from time to time in what failure of our moral conduct is dominant, depending on the circumstances and persons who enter our lives.

The Particular Examen concentrates on coping with the predominant moral weakness of our own personality.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola is so commonly associated with the Particular Examen that some have mistakenly supposed he invented the practice. He did not. He reduced it to a methodical form, and made it essential to the *Spiritual Exercises*. The retreat movement so spread throughout the world that the Particular Examen became the stock-in-trade of modern asceticism.

Already in ancient times the Greek philosopher Pythagoras obliged his disciples twice daily, morning and evening, to answer three questions:

1. What have I done?
2. How have I done it?
3. What have I failed to do?

² 1 Kings 19:12.

³ Puhl, paragraph #76.

Among the Christian Fathers, Saint Basil promised the early monks, "You will certainly grow in virtue if you make a daily account of your actions and compare them with the previous day."

The wisdom of the Particular Examen lies deeper than the old maxim, "*Divide et impera*" ... "Divide and Conquer." Evidently we have a better chance to master our tendencies if we take them one at a time and concentrate our efforts on the one weakness that now predominates in our lives. Centuries of moral wisdom have shown it is better to do this than scatter our energy of will over the whole field of our passions.

Saint Francis de Sales as a young man was given to melancholy, which sometimes bordered on despair. He specialized in overcoming despondency to the point where he became the modern Apostle of joyous confidence in God.

Conclusion

It is impossible to exaggerate the value of the *Examen of Conscience* in the spiritual life. It is the foundation of a life of prayer. It is the prayer of humility, in which we admit our ignorance and weakness. We beg Our Lord to supply for the needs that we have in this life in order to reach Him in that everlasting life for which we were made.

Copyright © 2003 Inter Mirifica.
Used with permission.

Take a few minutes and look at the *General Examen Guide* on the next page. For your convenience, a copy of this *Guide* is included in your packet of retreat information.

Examination of Conscience

This section of the *Retreat Manual* will assist you in examining your conscience in preparation for the General Confession (and also for weekly Confession). The period of life to be examined for a General Confession is the period since your last General Confession. If this is your first General Confession, then your entire life is to be examined. Look at your life in periods of time; for example, adolescence, high school, college, marriage, jobs held, career changes, etc. Look at key events. What stands out? What sins keep recurring?



Do this examination slowly and carefully, with a notebook in hand as you go through the precepts of the Church, the Ten Commandments, the seven capital sins, the Beatitudes and the theological virtues. Include not only the articulation of serious sins in number and kind, but also reflection on the *circumstances* that led to falling into these particular sins, the *feelings* that accompanied them and the soul's *consent* to them. Give the details that are necessary to reveal the context of the sin but do not reveal anyone else's sin and avoid rationalizing to justify one's behavior. It is helpful, once sins are listed, to put them in chronological order. Further information on making a General Confession is available in the *Retreatant Instructions* section of this *Manual*.

Take a moment and read Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen's explanation of sin:

Sin is a deliberate violation of the law of God. If you buy an electric coffeepot, you will find instructions in the form of a commandment. The instructions may read, "Put not the plug into the electric current when thy pot is empty." Suppose you say, "Why should anybody tell me what to do? He's violating my constitutional rights!" You forget the coffeepot manufacturer gave you instructions for perfect use. When God made us He gave us certain laws not to destroy our freedom but so we might perfect ourselves. When we violate those laws, we hurt ourselves. We break a relationship. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father said of the Prodigal, *He was dead; now he is alive!*

What is sin for the Christian? It is the breaking of a personal relationship. For those who are in the state of grace, it is a kind of crucifixion; it is the wounding and the hurting of the One we love.

Why are we sorry for our sins? Not because we have broken a contract; not just because we've broken a law, but because we have hurt Someone we love. Only when we discover God, and above all, His mercy in Christ, do we begin to understand sin fully. It takes love in order to make us understand sin. That seems strange, but it is true. Regardless of how great the sin, there is always mercy. To be a sinner is our distress. But to know we are a sinner is our hope, and the hope is the Sacrament of Penance.⁴

Saint John Paul II has some encouraging words for us too:

Because of Christ's love and mercy, there is no sin that is too great to be forgiven; there is no sinner who will be rejected. Every person who repents will be received by Jesus Christ with forgiveness and immense love.⁵

⁴ *Your Life is Worth Living*, (Schnecksville, PA: St. Andrew's Press, 2001), pp. 219-220. Used with the permission of St. Andrew's Press.

⁵ Address given during his Apostolic visit to Ireland on September 29, 1979.

So let's begin now with the *Examination of Conscience*. If possible, make your *Examination* in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It is important to begin by praying to God the Holy Spirit for His light and grace. In addition, ask the Blessed Mother for her help. Suggested prayers are below.

O Holy Spirit come in Thy mercy; enlighten my mind and strengthen my will that I may know my sins, humbly confess them, and sincerely amend my life. Mary, my Mother, Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit, refuge of sinners, assist me by thy intercession. Holy angels and saints of God, pray for me. Amen.⁶

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind that I may clearly know my sins. Move my heart, that I may be sincerely sorry for them, honestly confess them and firmly resolve to amend my life. Amen.⁷

My God, I believe in You, I hope in You, I love You above all things with all my soul, with all my heart, and with all my strength. I love You because You are infinitely good and worthy of being loved. And because I love You, I am sorry with all my heart for having offended You. Have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.⁸



“Yet, even now,” says the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (Joel 2:12-13).

⁶ *My Prayer Book: Happiness in Goodness*, Rev. F. X. Lasance, (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1908), pp. 344-345

⁷ *Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book with Meditations*, p. 88.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 89

Examine yourself regarding...

The Precepts of the Church

Have I observed the precepts of the Church?

1. To assist at Holy Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and to rest from servile labor. The six Holy Days of Obligation in the United States are:

- Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God – January 1
- Ascension Thursday – normally forty days after Easter
- The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven – August 15
- All Saints Day – November 1
- The Immaculate Conception of Our Lady – December 8
- The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) – December 25

There are four other Holy Days of Obligation prescribed in the general laws of the Church, namely, Epiphany (January 6), Saint Joseph (March 19), Saints Peter and Paul (June 29), and Corpus Christi. (In the United States these are not currently Holy Days of Obligation.)

2. To confess mortal sins at least once a year (cf. CIC, canon 989).

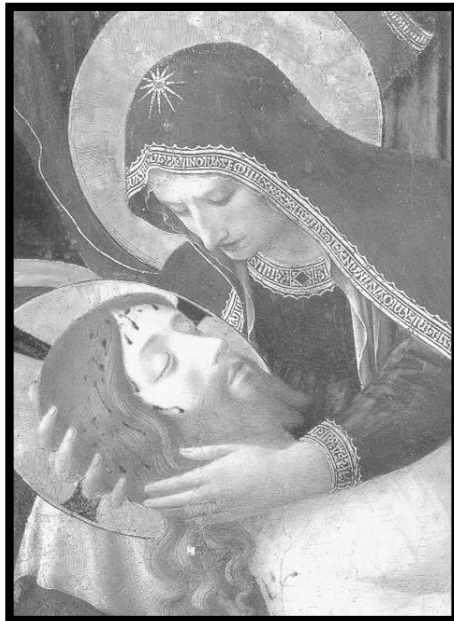
3. To receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter Season (Ash Wednesday to Pentecost Sunday or Trinity Sunday which is the Sunday after Pentecost).⁹

4. To fast and abstain from meat on the days established by the Church. In the United States, the days of fast and abstinence are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. All Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence from meat. Abstinence from meat applies to all those who have completed their fourteenth year. Fasting (1 regular meal and 2 small, as needed for sustenance) applies to those between the ages of 18 and 59.

5. To observe the Friday penance. Every Friday is to be a day of self-denial and mortification. The standard recommended penitential practice is abstinence from meat but other penitential acts or works of charity can be done. The systematic, deliberate neglect of such a penance on a consistent basis is mortally sinful.

6. To provide support (monetary, time or talent) for the needs of the Church.

7. To observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage: if at least one party is Catholic, one man and one woman must marry before an authorized Bishop, priest or deacon (or, in some rare cases, lay person) and two witnesses; they must choose freely and with adequate knowledge of marriage being a monogamous, lifetime commitment to the good of the other, and they must be open to the new life of children and committed to their children's care and education in the Catholic Faith.



⁹ According to the calendar of the *ordinary form* of the Sacred Liturgy, the Easter Season runs from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost Sunday. According to the calendar of the *extraordinary form*, it runs from Ash Wednesday to Trinity Sunday. Until the Church resolves the question otherwise, given these two options (both legitimate for practicing Catholics in the Roman Rite), Catholics may fulfill their Easter duty within both time frames. To fulfill the Easter duty on Trinity Sunday, one must attend a Mass in the *extraordinary form*.

The Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord your God, you shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
4. Honor your father and mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

Examination of Conscience on the Theological Virtues

by Father John A. Hardon, S. J.

Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

Available in *Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book*, "Particular Examen on the Theological Virtues," pp. 101-105 and from the Real Presence website under the title "*Examination of Conscience*" http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Sacraments/Sacraments_005.htm

If there is one part of the spiritual life that Saint Ignatius stressed, it was the daily—and even twice daily—*Examination of Conscience*.

As we read the *Spiritual Exercises*, we may be overwhelmed by the minute detail of Saint Ignatius' treatment of what he calls the *Particular Examination of Conscience*. At the same time, he is careful to provide "Some Notes Concerning Scruples" (*Spiritual Exercises*, paragraphs #345-351).

It is very important, therefore, that we form a clear and correct conscience. This means that we cultivate a sensitive judgment which is alert to the least offense against the Divine Will and, at the same time, protect ourselves against the wiles of the evil spirit. "The enemy," says Saint Ignatius, "considers carefully whether one has a lax or a delicate conscience. If one has a delicate conscience, the evil one seeks to make it excessively sensitive in order to disturb and upset it more easily. Thus, if he sees that one will not consent to mortal sin or venial sin, or even to the appearance of deliberate sin, since he cannot cause him to fall in a matter that appears sinful, he strives to make the soul judge that there is a sin, for example in a word or passing thought, where there is no sin" (*Spiritual Exercises*, paragraph #349).

It is valuable to reflect on this tactic of the evil spirit before we offer some practical norms for making our daily *Examination of Conscience*. Why? Because otherwise, we are liable to overlook the importance of a daily inventory of our moral conduct for fear of becoming scrupulous.

There is such a thing as growing in prudent sensitivity of conscience, without becoming a victim of the "enemy" as Saint Ignatius calls him. We may set this down as a general principle, for those who are sincerely striving to do the will of God:

1. It is characteristic of God and His angels, when they act upon the soul, to give true happiness and spiritual joy and to banish all the sadness and disturbances, which are caused by the enemy.
2. It is characteristic of the evil one to fight against such happiness and consolation by proposing fallacious reasonings, subtleties, and continual deceptions (*Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, II, paragraph #329).

What are we to conclude from this? That the more zealous we are in trying to please God, the more He will give us a deep interior peace

of soul. We should suspect as a temptation from the evil one, when we find ourselves worried or anxious or disturbed, no matter how pious the source of the worry or anxiety may be. The key to applying this principle is that, before God, I honestly want to do His will, even though through weakness I may fail to live up to my resolutions.

One basic virtue on which we should daily examine ourselves is peace of soul. We should ask ourselves, "Have I given in to worry or anxiety?" "Have I allowed myself to get discouraged?" A good practice is to pronounce the name, "Jesus," when we find ourselves getting despondent, or say some short aspiration like, "My Jesus, I trust in you," whenever we become dejected over something.

Particular Examen on the Theological Virtues

(Italicized texts are editor's additions.)

Before applying the Particular Examen to my own spiritual life, it is well to first ask myself, "What are the virtues that I know from experience I most need to develop?" The reason why this question should first be answered is that no two of us are equally prone to commit the same kind of sins. Nor are we personally always tempted in the same direction. There is wisdom in first knowing enough about myself, to be able to get attention in my spiritual life and concentrating on what is not so necessary for me at this time in my service of God.

Moreover, it would be a mistake to suppose that by attending to my moral failings, I am being "negative" in my pursuit of holiness. On the contrary, in God's Providence, He allows us to fail in those areas in which He especially wants us to grow in virtue.

We can fail in the practice of these virtues either by *commission*, *omission*, or by *tepidity*, in not acting as generously as we might in responding to the grace we have received from God.

Examine yourself regarding these questions:
Have I failed in thought, word, deed or omission in the practice of the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity?

Have I encouraged others not to practice these virtues?

Faith

Faith "is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that He has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because He is truth itself...the believer seeks to know and do God's will" (CCC 1814).

Do I make an honest effort to grow in the virtue of faith by daily mental prayer on the mysteries of the faith as revealed in the life of Jesus Christ?

Do I pray daily for an increase of faith?

Do I ever tempt God by relying on my own strength to cope with the trials in my life?

Do I unnecessarily read or listen to those who oppose or belittle what I know are truths of my Catholic Faith?

What have I done today to externally profess my faith?

Have I allowed human respect to keep me from giving expression to my faith?

Do I make a serious effort to resolve difficulties that may arise about my Faith... *by seeking out a priest or a magisterial teaching, such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church?*

Do I defend my faith, prudently and charitably, when someone says something contrary to what I know is to be believed?

Have I helped someone overcome a difficulty against the faith?

Do I make at least a short act of faith every day... *(My God, I believe, I adore, I trust, and I love Thee! I ask pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not trust and do not love Thee.)*

Hope

Hope "is the theological virtue by which we desire the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength

but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit”
(CCC 1817).

- Do I immediately say a short prayer when I find myself getting discouraged?
- Do I dwell on my worries instead of dismissing them from my mind?
- Do I fail in the virtue of hope by my attachment to the things of this world?
- Do I try to see God's Providence in everything that "happens" in my life?
- Do I try to see everything from the viewpoint of eternity?
- Am I confident that, with God's grace, I will be saved?
- Do I allow myself to worry about my past life and thus weaken my hope in God's mercy?
- Do I try to combine every fully deliberate action with at least a momentary prayer for divine help?
- How often today have I complained, even internally?
- Do I daily say a short act of hope...*(O my God, relying on Thy almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon for my sins, the help of Thy grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.)*

Charity

Charity “is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God”
(CCC 1822).

- Have I told God today that I love Him?
- Do I tell Jesus that I love Him with my whole heart?
- Do I take the occasion to tell God that I love Him whenever I experience something I naturally dislike?
- Have I capitalized on the difficulties today to tell God that I love Him just because He sent me the trial or misunderstanding?

- Do I see God's love for me in allowing me to prove my love for Him in the crosses He sent me today?
- Have I “seen Christ” in every person I met today...*
- Do I love by always willing “the good of another”?* (CCC 1766)
- Have I failed in charity by speaking unkindly about others?
- Have I dwelt on what I considered someone's unkindness toward me today?
- Is there someone that I consciously avoid because I dislike the person?
- Did I try to carry on a conversation today with someone who is difficult to talk to?
- Have I been stubborn in asserting my own will?
- How thoughtful have I been today in doing some small favor for someone?
- Have I allowed my mood to prevent me from being thoughtful of others today?
- Am I given to dwelling on other people's weaknesses or faults?
- Have I been cheerful today in my dealings with others?
- Do I control my uncharitable thoughts as soon as they arise in my mind?
- Did I pray for others today?
- Have I written any letters today?
- Have I controlled my emotions when someone irritated me?
- Have I performed any sacrifice today for someone?
- Do I daily say a short act of charity... *(O my God, I love Thee above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because Thou art all-good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of Thee. I forgive all who have injured me and ask pardon of all whom I have injured.)*

Copyright © 1999 by Inter Mirifica.
Used with permission.

Monthly Recollection by Father John A. Hardon, S. J.

Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

(Make it a practice to set aside one day of each month, for example, First Saturdays, for this private monthly recollection.)

Available in *Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book*, pp. 112-116.

“In order to guard and preserve the fruit of the *Spiritual Exercises* which we have been praising, and to revive its salutary memory, we must earnestly recommend a pious custom which may be called a brief repetition of the *Exercises*, namely, a monthly recollection” (Pope Pius XI, encyclical *Mens nostra*).

First Prelude. I will place myself in the presence of Christ, Our Lord, to whom I am to give an account of my stewardship for the past month. I will see at His side the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Ignatius, my Patron Saints and my Guardian Angel.

Second Prelude. I will ask for light to know whether or not I have advanced in perfection and the love of God during the past month; and for strength to correct my faults and employ the best means to please God more perfectly in the future.

1. The Favors Our Lord Has Bestowed on Me During the Past Month

I will consider how Our Lord has granted me the great grace of perseverance in religion and the means to attain the sublime end of my vocation: the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. Among these means are the daily exercises of piety and the frequent use of the Sacraments, the watchful care of my superiors and the good example of my associates. These favors were accompanied with special interior graces, divine impulses spurring me on to the practice of virtue and keeping me from many faults: fidelity to my resolutions, to the duties of my state in life, success in my office and occupations, in my study, teaching, or the apostolates of the Marian Catechists. Inspired with gratitude, I may well say with the psalmist:

Give glory to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever. Bless the Lord, my soul, and never forget all He has done for you. What shall I render to the Lord for the things He has given me?

2. The Present State of My Soul

In order to understand the state of my soul, I will consider my habitual disposition:

In regard to God. Have I offended Him less frequently during the past month? If so, I will thank Our Lord and beg for perseverance. But if I find that I have offended Him more often and seriously, I will beg pardon and examine thoroughly into the causes of my faults and determine on specific means to avoid them during the next month. Have I been faithful in the observance of the commitments of the *Marian Catechist Manual*? Do I look upon them as the distinct expressions of God's will for me, and do I realize in them the means of my sanctification?

In regard to my neighbor. Do I habitually see Christ, Our Lord, in my associates and obey those over me with humility and alacrity? Do I obey subordinate officials promptly, without excuse or complaint? Have I been respectful and considerate to my equals, and to those under my care? Have I avoided arguments, particular friendships or aversions? Did I honestly try to make myself agreeable to others by cheerfulness, by patience, by gladly helping them and cooperating with them? Am I too severe in my judgments of others, and have I learned to be firm without being harsh, and kind without being soft?

In regard to myself. Am I glad at times to feel the effects of poverty, to have the worst things in the house given to me? Have I tried to imitate the saints in chastity of body and mind? Do I

invoke the Blessed Virgin in time of temptation? Do I seriously try to conquer my passions, inordinate affections and inclinations to sensuality? Have I guarded my senses and practiced some penances?

3. The Daily Actions

I will now examine how I perform the ordinary actions of the day. Have I risen at the sound of the bell and immediately turned my thoughts to God?

Did I hear Mass with reverence, and receive Holy Communion with due preparation and thanksgiving?

Have I recited my prayers with attention and devotion, remembering that I was then praising God in the name of the whole Mystical Body of Christ and in union with the saints and the angels in Heaven?

Have I applied myself seriously and constantly to my duties and occupations, with a right intention, seeing the dispositions of Providence in all the circumstances of the day?

Have I avoided sensuality and selfishness in eating and drinking, and attended to the wants of my neighbor at table?

Have I been faithful in my devotions to the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, my Patrons and my Guardian Angel?

How do I make my twofold *Examen of Conscience*? Do I have a Particular Examen, which I make twice a day and of which I keep some kind of written account?

Do I give all the time allotted to the spiritual reading and try to derive benefit from what I read, not only for myself but for others?

What use do I make of aspirations? Do I make an effort to practice the presence of God and union with Our Lord, swelling in my soul by grace and abiding in His humanity in the Eucharist? How often do I visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament or make a momentary spiritual communion?

And now let me recall the resolutions of my last retreat or of my last monthly recollection, reading them over and checking to see how faithfully I have kept them. Above all let me go over the motives that induced me to resolve on certain courses of action, and let me renew these while deciding on the best means to implement my decision. Perseverance in my resolutions will be assured if I do this.

Colloquy. I will give fervent thanks to Our Lord for the benefits conferred on me during the past month. Then, addressing myself to the Blessed Virgin, Saint Ignatius, and my Patron Saints, I will ask them to obtain for me the grace to keep my resolutions for the future. I may conclude with the *Our Father, Hail Mary, and Anima Christi.*

Copyright © 2003 by Inter Mirifica.
Used with permission.

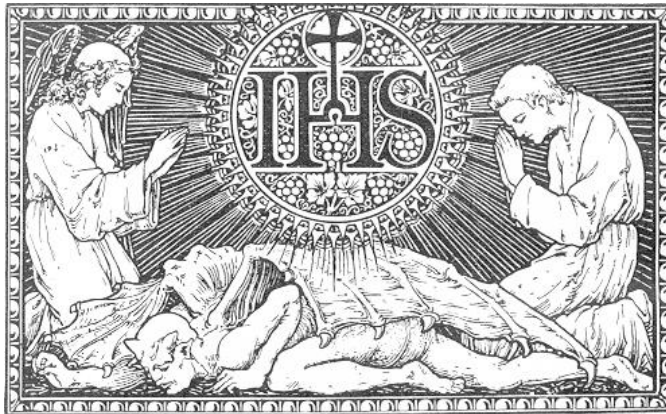
Discernment of Spirits

Saint Ignatius explains the three possible sources of our thoughts, feelings, emotions, desires and inspirations:

[T]here are three kinds of thoughts in my mind, namely: *one which is strictly my own*, and arises wholly from my own free will; *two others which come from without*, the one from the Good Spirit, and other from the evil one.¹⁰

As we grow in the spiritual life, it becomes increasingly necessary to learn to distinguish which thoughts, feelings and inspirations are from the Holy Spirit and are, therefore, to be accepted, and which are from the evil spirit and are to be rejected. Such distinctions are made through a process known as the *discernment of spirits*, about which Saint Ignatius has written extensively in his *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*.

The discernment of spirits, its great importance to the spiritual life, and the Rules for Discernment of Spirits will be studied in the following articles



Father Gabriel Amorth, chief exorcist of Rome, encourages us that the Lord grants to both exorcists and all the baptized “all of the grace needed to face and overcome the devil. For everyone can respond to his threats:

- *I am wrapped in the mantle of Our Lady; what can you do to me?*
- *I have St. Michael the Archangel on my side, try fighting with him.*
- *I have my Guardian Angel watching over me lest I be touched; you cannot do anything.”¹¹*

¹⁰ Puhl, paragraph #32.

¹¹ *God Is More Beautiful Than the Devil, a Spiritual Testament*, Father Angelo De Simone (St. Paul Publications, 2015). Book interview with Father Gabriele Amorth, exorcist of the Diocese of Rome since 1986.

The Gift of Discernment by Father John A. Hardon, S.J. Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate



Transcript of a conference given to the Handmaids of the Precious Blood, Feb. 28, 1996, Cor Jesu Monastery, Jemez Springs, NM. Available from The Real Presence website:
http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Discernment/Discernment_001.htm

Although by now the terminology has become commonplace in Catholic spirituality, its historical popularization on a broad level began with Saint Ignatius. He has long and elaborate rules for what he calls *discernment of spirits*. In his own life, it was through his *discernment of spirits* that he discovered his vocation and the work that God wanted him to do. Wounded in the battle of Pamplona, bedridden for months, he had nothing to do but read lives of the saints. That made him reflect on his past, of which he was ashamed. Although he had, at times, one kind of feelings, when he thought other kinds of thoughts, he had other kinds of feelings.

So he had a third kind of thought, namely, there is a difference between the kind of spirit which prompts one kind of thinking and the spirit that prompts another kind of thinking. This was the beginning, at least in most modern spiritual theology, of the *discernment of spirits*.

It is not my purpose to elaborate on the Ignatian theology of discernment. It is rather to look at the vast subject in biblical perspective – to first ask three questions and then close with some practical observations.

- What are the biblical presuppositions on which *discernment of spirits* is based?
- What is the theology of the *discernment of spirits*?
- What is the psychology of this discernment?

Biblical Presuppositions

Regarding biblical presuppositions, we know there are many things in the Bible which form the premises or the pre-condition of things which by now the Church has developed and on which so much of our spiritual lives is built. So here, regarding discernment. While the whole New Testament is filled with implicit presuppositions,

implying that there were certain premises underlying that discernment, the moment you even talk about discerning anything, you've got to talk about norms and principles, otherwise how can you discern, which means *distinguish*?

While there are many implicit premises in the New Testament, there are three classical places in the writings of three of the Apostles where we have the preamble for the foundation in faith for the elaborate spirituality of discernment on which the Church has since built. The first is Saint Paul in his *Letter to the Galatians*, chapter 5:16-25. The second is Saint Peter's second letter, chapter 2:1-10. The third is Saint John in his first letter, chapter 4:1-6.

Without saying more about these biblical presuppositions, let me recommend that you read them and use them as meditation. They are the foundation of our biblical faith for all that, over the centuries, the Church and the Church's writers have said about discernment.

Taking each in sequence, I shall point out the different focus of Paul, Peter and John. Each is a whole panorama of deep insight as to how to discern the good from the evil spirit, but each is also different. Based, then, on each of three passages, which we technically call *exegesis* of what Peter, Paul and John are saying, we have a better understanding of what *discernment of spirits* means on the grounds of our faith—because, remember, between the faith we profess and the life that we live, there must be reflection, understanding, analysis and application. Bare faith alone is not sufficient; we must appropriate the faith, make it our own, study it, ask God to enlighten us as to what He means.



Saint Paul

Galatians 5:16-25

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another.

Two spirits, two kinds of fruits

First, Saint Paul. Paul speaks of two kinds of spirits active in the world: the Holy Spirit and the evil spirit. In writing to the Galatians, after having told them in plain Greek, "Who has bewitched you, you stupid Galatians?" he comes to contra pose two ways in which the two different spirits operate: the Holy Spirit in one way, the evil spirit in another.

There is logic behind his long description of how the Holy Spirit produces one kind of fruit (that's where we get the fruits, by the way, in this passage

in Galatians—the fruits of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the evil spirit). Each manifests itself in different conduct in the different people. In one case, they have allowed themselves to be inspired by the Good Spirit, and in the other, instigated by the evil one. What's the essential difference?

After you go through the fruits of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the evil spirit—both are there—and you compare them and you boil them down to their ultimate essence, the fruits of the Holy Spirit can be reduced to *love of God and love of neighbor*, and the fruits of all evil spirits can be reduced to *love of self and indulgence*.

The Good Spirit makes goodness possible

How does the Good Spirit show Himself? In the person loving God and his neighbor. He may not know he has the fruits of the Spirit, or know how many fruits there are; no less, he is the object of the Good Spirit working in him. And wherever you find self-love and self-indulgence, this is the infallible revealed sign of the evil spirit. We can tell where the one or the other spirit has been active, depending on the kind of conduct that we see.

This, however, is more subtle than we have so far implied. Why? Because you might think that a person can be good and their conduct morally praiseworthy without necessarily saying that the Good Spirit is active. Not so. It is impossible—and this is the key—it is impossible to practice moral good, as Christ expects His followers to do, without something more than mere human moral power. It requires grace; it requires assistance in the form of light and strength from a power beyond the human—namely, the Divine.

Whenever we see genuine goodness on Christian principles, whether we realize it or not, whether we admit it or not, that goodness is not the mere product of that human being. It cannot be. Christ's teachings, the Christian ethic, cannot be lived out without the Holy Spirit enlightening the mind and continuously inspiring the will.

Consequently, if a person gives himself to the Holy Spirit, then his conduct will be revealed, and while we may generously praise the person, we should first praise God; because, while it is true that, except for the person's free cooperation, he would not be practicing the virtue which he does, it is — before, during and all through whatever good we do

– mainly the Holy Spirit Who is the responsible agent.

What we're after in using Saint Paul's principles is to find out where is the Good Spirit in this world. Saint Paul tells us He is in all good people. Not in some vague poetic sense, but in the most fundamental sense possible: that it is the Good Spirit who makes this goodness really possible.

Our capacity to do evil

When a person is doing good by Christian standards, we say he could not do this except with the light and assistance of the Spirit of God. When a person is doing evil, he is not precisely giving in to a power beyond himself; he is really giving in to himself. This means that except for the instigation of the evil spirit, we don't need superhuman power to do evil. All we have to do is allow the evil spirit to tempt us to do our own wills.

We then can recognize, whenever we see evil (and the greater the evil, the more sure we are), that the evil spirit has tempted, not precisely inspired. Giving the devil his due, however, we shouldn't give him more than his due. People don't need the devil to give in to themselves. They don't really need the devil to sin, because what is the essence of sin? The essence of sin is self-will contrary to the will of God.

The masters of the spiritual life, building on Saint Paul, therefore, said that we can discern the Good from the evil spirit if we study the direction which the thought or the inspiration takes. If it is towards pride—which means self-satisfaction, self-complacency, self-adulation, in a word, self-will—suspect the spirit of evil. You see, that's all he had to do at the beginning of the history of the human race. We have within us, provided we allow ourselves to give in to the demonic temptation, the capacity for all evil. That's the power we have. But as to do good, that's different. We don't have in our power either the light or the strength—I don't say to do any good, because we do have that—we can listen to classical music, for example—but in order to carry out what Christ expects His followers to do, we need more than ourselves to do it. So much for Saint Paul.



Saint Peter

2 Peter 2:1-10

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master Who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their licentiousness, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words; from of old their condemnation has not been idle, and their destruction has not been asleep. For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into Hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment; if He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven other persons, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes He condemned them to extinction and made them an example to those who were to be ungodly; and if He rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked (for by what that righteous man saw and heard as he lived among them, he was vexed in his righteous soul day after day with their lawless deeds), then *the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial and to keep the unrighteous under punishment* until the day of judgment and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they are not afraid to revile the glorious ones.

Saint Peter presumes the activity of both the Good and evil spirits. His stress is on the operations of the evil spirit. Otherwise than Saint Paul, however,

Saint Peter's emphasis, besides being on the evil spirit, is also on the contest, the conflict between, not so much good and evil, as between truth and falsehood.

Saint Peter concentrates on the *spirit of falsehood*. Then in his ten verses (2 Peter 2:1-10) he speaks at great length about true and false prophets. Saint Peter identifies the false prophets as persons who have listened to the *spirit of error*. Saint Peter's words in the Greek, which he used, made it clear that he was speaking about listening to the spirit of error. We hear a lot of things; we shouldn't listen to everything we hear. Listening is hearing with attention. So, behind these prophets of error, Saint Peter points to the spirit of error. He further isolates the character of these prophets of error. They are also prophets of deceit. And, indeed, he spells out various levels of falsehood or of decadence; and since it is the spirit of error behind these spokesmen of error, there are levels of malice.

Levels of Malice

What are the levels of malice relative to the truth?

- On the most shallow level is mere ignorance of the truth. It's bad, but the persons who don't know the truth may not even themselves be responsible. They simply don't know. So that decadence, relative to truth, has depths. The least serious is just ignorance of the truth.
- Second, and a deeper level, is exclusion of the truth. That's more than ignorance; that's error. In other words, you not only don't know, but you accept and you prefer the opposite to the truth, which is error.
- Third level, where a person embraces the error. He not only is in error, but embraces it, and then seeks to promote it. That's false teaching.
- But there is one deeper level—the dungeon—where the one who, having embraced error and is teaching falsehood, conceals his designs by stealth and cunning, in order to seduce others into error.

All of this is implied when Saint Peter warns the faithful against the prophets of falsehood.

Implications

What are the implications? There are manifold implications.

1. First, the evil spirit uses human beings to propagate error—just as the Good Spirit uses human beings to propagate the truth.
2. Second, that these human beings, inspired by error, become teachers who are absolutely convinced that error is truth. It may take the evil spirit years—and some fail the course—to convince certain people that what is error is the truth. If you've met them, as I have, they're thoroughly convinced, for example, that God is not infinitely perfect, that He is a changeable Being; indeed, that He is part of the universe. And the man who believes this can be a Catholic priest teaching theology. They speak, they write, they have misled millions. They have such conviction as you sometimes would wish to see in believers believing the truth. ...[T]he propagators of error are convinced that what they are doing is good because what they believe is thought to be the truth. They really do! Of course, the evil spirit has helped in creating the certitude; have no doubt, it's there.

Hiding the Falsehood

Now how do people who are properly trained in the school of the evil spirit hide their designs? How do they falsify the truth? In two ways: in what they teach, namely, *content*; and in how they teach, *methodology*. Generally speaking, it is far easier to recognize false content. It is much more difficult to recognize a methodology which will be consciously deceptive, because then the false content will be camouflaged. It is critically important, therefore, to know that error always conceals its designs: error is always deceitful. Error is falsehood; deceit is hiding the falsehood.

People look for evil as evil, or error as error. They have been beguiled (mislead) into embracing evil as good and error as the truth. So they have truths, partial truths, aspects that are true, but by the time you've swallowed the sweet pill, you realize it is cyanide. Falsehood, then, is always cunning.

The evil spirit is always the erroneous spirit. He tries, if he can, to deceive good people under specious designs. Note, therefore, that falsehood cannot succeed except through cunning. From the first Fall of the human race to the last Fall of the human race, from the first sin to the last sin that will ever be committed, it is committed because people

have allowed themselves to embrace falsehood through being deceived by cunning. Falsehood would never take people away from God unless they were deceived into thinking that what is false is really true.

How to identify agents of the evil spirit

The spirit of error always seeks to hide. What I'm sharing with you is things to look for in people, people who are the agents of the evil spirit. They always seek to hide; they are never fully open. The spirit of error fears to be identified. So they will have commissions or committees or organizations or this group or that group. Who's behind it? Nobody knows. It tries to conceal, it avoids openness and frankness. It always makes evil look like good or, as I prefer, it *masks evil under the guise of good*, always. That adverb is part of our faith. To be on one's guard is to have won half the victory.

All the successful misleaders of history (listen to this – this is a capsulized personality sketch of all the great misleaders in the Church, of the Church) they have all been attractive people. They have all been appealing personalities. They have all been pleasant in their manners. They have been disarmingly sincere. They have often appeared to be extraordinarily pious. What I consider the most devastating heretic of all times was a contemplative monk by the name of Pelagius—an ascetic, a bag of bones, his contemporaries tell us. So he came along and said it's not God's grace but human will that can give us mastery over our passions and finally win Heaven. He looked like a titan of will power. They are, with the rarest exception, ascetical people and remarkably charismatic in their temperament and personality—magnetic people, no exceptions. So much for Saint Peter.

Saint John

1 John 4:1-6

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every Spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already. Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for He Who is in you is greater

than he who is in the world. They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them. We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

We still have Saint John. No single New Testament writer speaks more often or more clearly about the need for *discernment of spirits* than Saint John. It is in Saint John that we have the familiar dichotomy, which means conflict, between light and darkness. He begins his Gospel on that theme and he ends the Apocalypse on that theme. In Heaven we shall have no more need of the sun or the moon or stars. Christ will be the light of the elect.

- So, light and darkness, Christ and the world. That's Saint John.
- Peace and turmoil. That's Saint John.
- The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. That's Saint John, till the last verse of the *Book of Revelation*.

Identify the Antichrists

Now in the passage to which I referred in his first letter, Chapter 4:1-6, Saint John isolates the target of the conflict between these two forces by identifying how the Spirit of God can be distinguished from the spirit that is not of God. He is very practical. According to John, it all depends on if a person accepts Jesus Christ. Those who do, are His followers; those who don't are followers of the antichrist. (It's John who coined the term "antichrist.")

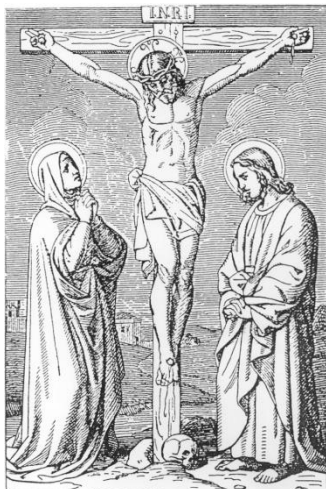
But he means something more definite than just that in one case Christ is accepted, and in the other, He is rejected. He means more than just the semantic *acceptance* or *rejection*. He means first of all that the acceptance of Christ is the acceptance of Christ as the natural Son of God. A lot of people say they accept Christ. What do you mean? This is John's question. Who is Christ? Is He the Word of God that was with God because He is God from the beginning? That's what acceptance of Christ means: that that man, Jesus, is God.

Whereas, the rejection of Christ is the denial of Christ's divinity. Words couldn't be clearer. Who is the antichrist? The spirit at large in the world that has by now convinced many people that Jesus is not God. Thus, for John, you can distinguish the evil spirit from the Good Spirit by their respective

attitudes towards Christ. The spirit of evil denies that God took on human flesh, dwelt among us, and taught the human race the way to salvation, and is now teaching mankind through the Church He founded.

Followers of Christ

The Holy Spirit, operating in Christ's followers, professes Christ's divinity, and His followers thereby submit themselves to the hard requirements of His teaching, communicated by His Church. Not, of course, because the teachings are hard. Monogamy, celibacy, self-sacrifice, charity towards the uncharitable, mercy towards the unmerciful, patience with the impatient, and the endurance of the cross is hard. That's not why the followers of Christ embrace these, but because, though hard and unpalatable to our natural desires, these mysteries of the faith should be lived out because the One Who told us, and through His Church tells us, they should be lived out is our GOD.



Never perhaps, in the Church's history, was it more necessary to make the right *discernment of spirits*, that is, distinguish truth from error and virtue from malice. Why is it so important? Because so much error has insinuated itself into nominally Christian and Catholic circles and is being propagated by so many who still consider themselves Christians and

Catholics and, maybe, even leaders in the Church of God.

Practical Observations

How to discriminate? All that I have just said is the answer to "how." But let me add three suggestions at the end.

- 1. First, watch the conduct of people.** Ideas are often hard to identify; people can be recognized. Are they humble and patient? Are they respectful of the Holy See? Are they docile to the teachings of the Church? If they're not, no matter what else you may like about them, protect yourselves—they are dangerous.
- 2. Second, expect false teachers to disguise their intentions.** They are attractive; they are disarmingly nice people; they are, generally, pious people. Expect error to be in disguise.
- 3. Three, watch for humble submission or proud unwillingness.** And finally, recognize with Saint John that the surest mark of Christ's Spirit in what we hear, in what we read, in what we see or observe is the humble submission to Christ's teaching. And conversely, the plainest mark of the antichrist is the proud unwillingness to follow this teaching as interpreted by the Church. The first is to be followed because it is true, and truth is identified by humility. The second is to be avoided because it is false, and falsehood is always identified by its pride.

Copyright © 2002 Inter Mirifica.
Used with Permission.

The Strategy of the Devil in Demonic Temptations

by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

Available from The Real Presence website:

http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Angelology/Angelology_013.htm

Expect to be Tempted

It was divinely providential that Christ allowed Himself to be tempted by the devil at the beginning of His public ministry. He is teaching us one of the most important lessons we need to learn in life. If He, the living God in human form, was tempted by the evil spirit, then we must expect to be tempted as well. In order to imitate Christ, we must resist the devil, as Christ Himself resisted the devil.

As Saint John tells us, we are tempted from three sources: the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil*.

1. The world is the attractive sinful conduct of other people.
2. The flesh is our concupiscence, the natural inclination that we now have after the Fall of the human race, to follow what appeals to us even though it is displeasing to God.
3. The devil is, in some ways, the most powerful enemy we have in the spiritual life. If there is one thing we learn from the masters of the spiritual life, it is to expect to be tempted by the evil spirit. It was the evil spirit who tempted Eve and brought on the Fall of the human race.

The Character of the Devil

The devil is an evil spirit

As we reflect on temptations by the devil in our own lives, we must keep in mind who the devil is. He is the evil spirit. *Spirit* because he is not sensibly perceptible. We cannot hear him with our bodily ears or see him with our bodily eyes. He is an evil spirit whose number is legion and who has been phenomenally successful in seducing untold numbers from their allegiance to God.

Saint Ignatius has a key meditation in the *Spiritual Exercises* on what he calls the *Two Standards*. The *Two Standards* correspond to the two leaders in the world who are drawing people to follow them. One leader is Jesus Christ, who inspires believing Christians to dedicate themselves to the extension of His Kingdom throughout the world. The other leader is Satan, who is trying to seduce people to follow him for the extension of his demonic

kingdom. In the words of Saint Augustine, [the devil's kingdom] is the "City of Man," which is in constant conflict with the Kingdom of Christ. The devil knows that you get nowhere alone. You inspire others to follow you, then you train your followers and disciples and they will carry on your work. The devil trains his followers to seduce not just people or cities, but whole nations.

The devil is a liar

If we wish to resist the temptations of the evil spirit, we must know something about [his]—demonic character. He is a liar by nature. He lied to Eve in the Garden of Eden, telling her that God forbade her and Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit because God was afraid that they, Adam and Eve, would come to know what God knows, the meaning of good and evil.

The devil lied to Judas who betrayed his Master because the devil made Judas think that he could remain a follower of Christ while remaining a friend of Christ's enemies. The Church teaches that what Judas wanted was money. The saints said that this is why Judas committed suicide. He was deceived. He had gotten his money, but his betrayal and his gain of money brought on the Passion of his Master, Jesus Christ. The devil deceived Pilate into condemning Christ to death, even though Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent.

Over the centuries this had been the basic tactic of the evil spirit – deceit. Pilate feared losing the friendship of Caesar. Yet, after condemning Jesus, Pilate soon lost his position and died a humiliating, cowardly death.

The devil is envious

We are talking about who the devil is. The devil became who he is because he envied the majesty of God. Ever since his own fall because of envy, this has been the fundamental means that the devil uses to seduce people from their loyalty to God. It was the devil who inspired Cain to murder his brother Abel out of envy. It was the devil who inspired Saul to want to murder David out of envy. It was the

devil who inspired the Scribes and Pharisees to condemn Christ to an ignominious death. Why? Because they envied Christ's popularity among the people. Thousands followed Jesus, spending whole days without eating in order to listen to Jesus. And so the Scribes and Pharisees tried the most atrocious way of getting people to listen to them. It was the devil, the Apostle tells us, who seduced Judas to betray his Master out of envy.

The devil is a murderer

Christ tells us, "The devil is a murderer from the beginning." Unless our First Parents had been seduced by the devil, bodily death would never have entered the human race. But the devil is a murderer in the deepest sense. His ambition is to murder human souls. Remember there is a *first death*, the death of the human body. There is a *second death*, the death of the soul. The devil's ambition is to murder human souls by destroying God's grace in their spiritual lives. Being in Hell himself, the devil wants nothing more than to bring human beings to join him in his own eternal damnation.

The devil commands an army

The devil is not one person. The devil is an organized battalion of malice. Some of the Fathers of the Church speak of two mystical bodies in the world. There is a Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church He founded [and] that we call the Church Militant. There is also a mystical body of Satan, founded by Lucifer, which is literally hell-bent on conquering the Mystical Body of Christ. This is the main reason why the Church on earth is called the Church Militant. It is most important to recognize the organized character of the legions of the evil spirit. Let us be sure that we recognize the Church Militant as more than an adjective. As the saints tell us, the followers of Christ have one powerful weapon in battling the devil. That weapon is the Cross. **We shall conquer the evil spirit on one condition. That we love the Cross, venerate the Cross, use the Cross to defeat the devil and his followers.**

Tactics of the Devil

The devil uses human government

One more description of the devil. The devil uses civil authority, call it the *State*, to war against the followers of Christ. It is surely not coincidental that Pontius Pilate, the civil governor of Palestine, condemned Jesus to a shameful death on the Cross.

Over the centuries, the enemies of Christ have used the power of the State to undermine the moral teachings of the Savior. Legalized murder [by abortion] under State authority in most of the countries of the world is surely the work of the devil. He uses State power. I heard from a man just recently: "I have spent the last four years of my life in prison for praying the rosary before abortuaries." As I said before, the State is the organized battalion, which is being used by the devil to destroy the Mystical Body of Christ.

The devil is a professional accommodator

To live the spiritual life according to the teachings of Our Lord, we must brace ourselves to expect opposition from the evil spirit. This opposition ranges across the whole spectrum of human nature. The devil is a professional accommodator. He adjusts himself to different people in different ways.

I cannot recommend a more informative source of knowledge about the devil's tactics than the two sets of *Rules for Discernment of Spirits* by Saint Ignatius of Loyola. They are the fruit of Ignatius' own lifetime struggle with evil spirits, in his own personal life and the lives of his followers in the Society of Jesus. The single most important thing to know about demonic strategy is how differently the devil tempts what I may call "good" and "bad" people.

Good people would be those who are sincerely trying to do God's will. They are weak and they fail. They make mistakes and they do, at times, offend God. But their underlying philosophy of life is to be faithful to Jesus Christ.

Bad people, on the other hand, are those who are living in sin. They may profess to be Christian believers or they may be in positions of great importance and influence in the Church and society. But, their philosophy is basically to follow their own inclinations, no matter how sinful these may be. In a word, they are living in sin.

The devil tells "good people" that the Christian life is burdensome

What is the technology of the devil who is tempting these two classes of people? For those who are seriously trying to remain faithful to God, the devil is unbelievably clever in trying to induce them to *worry*, to be *anxious*, to be *discouraged* and *despondent*, and if possible, even to *drive them to*

despair. The devil's intentions are obvious. He knows such people too well not to know that he would not succeed by tempting them to obvious sins. What he wants to do, however, is to deceive such persons into thinking that a faithful Christian life is burdensome or boring or oppressively difficult. The devil wants to deceive such persons into thinking that such a Christian life is oppressive; it is too much.

The devil tells "bad people" that there is no sin

How does the devil act in tempting people who are already steeped in sin? His policy is to do the very opposite of how he acts with those who are trying to remain faithful to God. If these sinners have a little faith to begin with, he will deceive them into thinking there really is no such thing as sin. As so many modern psychologists and psychiatrists tell their clients (and these are the exact words of a professional psychiatrist, published in a book), "Don't be a slave of your conscience. Satisfy your desires. You are in charge of your own life. You determine what is good and you choose what you want." If these sinners still have some faith in God, the devil will tell them not to worry, God is merciful. In all these cases, the demonic strategy is clear. Keep sinners in their sinful state of mind, and keep them from ever repenting of their sinful state of soul.

The devil says no action is fundamentally evil

There is one more device of the father of lies that is so important. It is an underlying theme of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *The Splendor of Truth*. This is more than a device or even just a tactic. It is a fundamental premise of demonic strategy. As the Holy Father explains, millions of people in the modern world have been deceived into claiming that there is no such thing as an inherently or intrinsically evil action. That is to say:

Nothing that a man does is ever evil by itself; it is only the circumstances, or the motives, or the situation in which people do things, which determine the morality of their conduct.

Once people accept this principle, there is nothing which two thousand years of Christianity have taught to be sinful, which is still a sin. Why not? Because there are now so many, how well I know, professedly Christian moralists in professedly Catholic universities and seminaries, who teach that abortion, or contraception, or euthanasia or adultery are not sinful.

Clearly, only the devil could have invented such malevolent theories. Yet they have penetrated academic circles that are shaking some parts of the Christian world to its foundation.

The devil seduces with advertising

We should say something more about the tactics of the devil, here as seducer of human minds and wills.

The evil spirit seduces the mind by making error appealing. What we now call advertising goes back to the earliest days of recorded history. The ancient Romans publicized what they wanted the people to get with resources they did not have. Today's world, in the most absolute sense of the word, is the *age of advertising*. The average cost of advertising in America today is over one hundred and fifty billion dollars every year. Not incidentally, this amount of money is enough to support more than one nation, especially in Africa and Asia.

The evil spirit capitalizes on this advertising phenomenon and literally seduces millions. He makes them think they *need* what they *want*, just because they want it.

Take the tragic instability of family life in America. The annual average is now over one divorce for every two marriages. In the future, it will be even worse as the children of broken homes reach marriageable and—we have to coin a word—*divorceable* age. Yet always, divorce and remarriage seem to be the easy way out. It looks like a quick solution to a deep problem. And the press, radio and television sustain the falsehood by telling married people of the benefits of divorce. The laws of our country abet the conspiracy by making it next to impossible to save a marriage if one of the partners wants to be released, as they say, from the tyranny of a husband or wife.

The devil seduces with passions

The evil spirit tries to seduce not only the human mind but also the human will. He entices our wills by releasing our passions. He wants to arouse the passions of the flesh and, what is less obvious, the passions of the soul. Why should he want to do this? What connection is there between passion and sin? The connection is that of cause and effect. Sin always leaves its mark on the sinner. It is like throwing a bottle of nitric acid into a person's face and burning out his eyes. Every sin we commit weakens our powers of reason and intelligent

perception. The more serious the sin and the more often committed, the greater is this induced darkening of man's most precious possession, which makes him most like God – his ability to think. Sinners do not think. They emote (express emotion in an exaggerated manner), and then write “learned” volumes defending their irrationality.

How otherwise explain the crimes of a Stalin or a Hitler, who sent millions to their death in the cold deserts of Siberia and the gas chambers and hot ovens of Germany? How otherwise explain the mania of abortion? No human beings, unless inspired by the devil, could be so cruel as to murder millions of innocent children. Only demonic hatred or lust for power and pleasure could explain what we are now witnessing in one once-civilized country after another.

Coping with Demonic Temptations

Practice humility—depend completely on God

The Apostle Saint Peter tells us how to cope with the evil spirit. Peter knew, because already in his lifetime, the devil had seduced many who had been followers of Christ. The quotation is a bit lengthy but is worth giving in full.

All of you practice humility towards one another. For God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in the time of visitation. Cast all your anxieties upon Him, because He cares for you. Be sober, be watchful! For your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same suffering befalls your brethren all over the world. (*1 Peter 5:5-8*)

What, then, is the first and indispensable condition for resisting the evil spirit? It is a deep, sincere humility of heart.

Expect temptation; depend on grace

As Saint Peter tells us, we are not to be afraid of the evil spirit. Why not? Because we have the grace of God, one of whose main purposes is to resist the machinations of the devil. At the same time we must be watchful. This means we must expect to be tempted by the father of lies. We must have a clear mind in order to distinguish “inspirations” of the Good Spirit from “instigations” of the evil spirit.

Be sober, or temperate

We must be sober, which is a strange word in our drink-preoccupied society. Sobriety, in the language of Scripture, means temperance in the use of the creatures in our lives. God wants us to enjoy some of the things that He gives us. But, He also wants us to endure, and endure many creatures; He wants us to remove some creatures; and He wants us to sacrifice many things that are naturally pleasing. All of this is locked up in that strange [phrase], *be sober*.

Be at peace

The devil knows us very well. He cannot read our secret thoughts but he can conclude to our inner spirit by our external behavior, and even, as exorcists tell me, the emotional expressions on our face. When Saint Peter tells us not to be afraid of the evil spirit he means more than meets the eye. He means that we should not even show by our emotions that we are afraid of the devil. Our emotional expressions, in what we say, how we react, how we allow our feelings to manifest themselves in our bodies—all of these are dangerous in dealing with the devil. We must not only be at peace inside, but manifest a peaceful attitude in our external behavior. The devil is especially influential in mastering those who are afraid of him. The courageous behavior of Christ in His temptation by the devil is a pattern of how we should deal with the evil spirit.

Never talk to the devil

One strong recommendation: never engage the devil in conversation. I mean NEVER. If you must tell the devil to depart, if you want the devil to go, tell him, but never engage him in what could even be interpreted as a friendly conversation. I have had enough experience of people foolish enough to engage in conversation with the devil who have suffered disastrous consequences as a result.

Be strong in your faith

One more recommendation based on Saint Peter's injunction. Be strong in your faith. This is not a pious cliché. It means that we exercise our faith, courageously undertaking what we believe God wants us to do and not be afraid of the consequences. The faith we need is the faith of living martyrs in our day. We are to be witnesses of the power of Christ as Divine Exorcist and never allow ourselves to doubt that God's grace in our lives is more powerful than all the demons of Hell.

Pray daily to Saint Michael the Archangel

Pray daily to Saint Michael the Archangel. He was the first leader of those who drove the fallen spirits to their eternal damnation. Saint Michael is our chief commander in dealing with the strategy of the master of evil and the prince of this world. Christ assured us that He has overcome the world, which means that we have received from Christ the grace to do the same in our demonically plagued society....

Saint Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, oh prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into Hell Satan and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Pray to Mary, Queen of Martyrs

Mary, Queen of martyrs, obtain for us from your Son the wisdom and the power of successfully resisting the machinations of the devil in our lives. Your divine Son told us He has overcome the world and the prince of this world by His life and death on the Cross. Obtain for us the light we need to recognize the instigation of the evil one and the strength to witness to our faith in Christ, the Conqueror of evil, until we enter the company of the angels who won their battle against the spirits of evil at the beginning of time. Amen.

Copyright © 1996 Inter Mirifica.

Used with permission.

The Evil Spirit in Conflict with Christ and His Followers by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

Transcript of a conference given to the Handmaids of the Precious Blood, Cor Jesu Monastery, Jemez Springs, NM. Available from The Real Presence website under the title, "Ignatian Retreat – July 1974 (10 of 19) – The Evil Spirit in Conflict with Christ and His Followers"
http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Spiritual_Exercises/Spiritual_Exercises_034.htm

A balanced understanding of Christ and His Church includes the realization of the conflict with the evil spirit or, as Saint John calls him, the *spirit of darkness*. Until not so long ago, it was not acceptable to even talk about the devil; but all of a sudden it became quite popular. Though much of the popularity is not very deep, it does indicate an instinctive realization in man's heart that there is a world of spirits besides the world of sense, space and time; and not only is there a spirit world which is good, but given the sheer magnitude of evil in the world, there must be in addition to human malice, invisible malice that is at work in the human race today.

We who believe in the Holy Spirit also might (though we do not) include in our recitation of the *Creed*, "And I believe in the *evil* spirit." We believe in both. We believe that he is not only the instinctive or even logical conclusion to some explanation of the evil in the world; we believe that the evil spirit is not only real, but that his name is Legion, and that he is to be taken seriously in any attentive approach to the spiritual life.

Jesus' temptation

As the context for our reflections, we take from the beginning of Christ's public life the narrative about the temptation in the wilderness. The three synoptic Evangelists (*Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*) all give the account. Saint Matthew's description, however, is the most detailed and it is the one that we shall use. He tells us that Christ was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the evil spirit. Saint Matthew further says that Christ fasted for forty days and forty nights and that after that long period of time He was hungry. Then he describes the three sets of temptations:

The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves." But he replied, "Scripture says: Man does not

live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

The devil then took him to the holy city and made Him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down; for Scripture says: He will put you in His angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone."

Jesus said to him, "Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test."

Next, taking Him to a very high mountain, the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "I will give you all these," he said, "if you fall at my feet and worship me." Then Jesus replied, "Be off, Satan! For Scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve Him alone." Then the devil left Him, and angels appeared and looked after Him.

Three great concupiscences

I will briefly recapitulate each of the three temptations, with just a word about each one, and then draw some very salutary implications. Saint John tells us there are three great sources of temptation which we call the three great concupiscences. These three kinds of desires, because we have a fallen nature, tend to betray us.

1. First there is *concupiscence of the flesh*, illustrated by the fact that the devil began by asking Christ, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves." The Fathers of the Church agree that the devil did not know whether Christ was

the Son of God. Concupiscence of the flesh is symbolized by the temptation to gluttony.

2. Then, *concupiscence of the eyes*. Christ was tempted in such a way as to want to display Himself or, in effect, to tempt God's Providence, to sin by presumption.
3. Finally, everything was promised to Christ, so the devil told Him, if only Christ would kneel down to worship him. This is the concupiscence which Saint John calls *the pride of life*.

Three sources of temptation: world, flesh and the devil

In order to look at these three sources of temptation we have to remind ourselves that there are three ways we can be tempted. I am now distinguishing temptation from the *concupiscence of the flesh, of the eyes, and the pride of life*. Speaking in general, we can be tempted by people outside of us, which is typified by *the world*; we can be tempted from within ourselves, which is typified by *the flesh*; and we can be tempted by *the evil spirit*.

First, temptations from the world may be summarily described as all the temptations to which we are subject through bad example. Indeed this is one of the graces of religious life, that we may deliver ourselves so far as it is possible from what is symbolized by the world. One of the rights that religious have when they enter a community is to be given good example. Why are we tempted by people's bad example? This temptation is based on the urge that we all have to conformity. We want to be like other people; we want others to accept us. And the one thing that we most dread is to be rejected. We don't want to be different. We fear being ostracized.

Second, the flesh. We commonly attribute this to temptations of the body, of the sensual or sexual passions which we all have with our fallen natures. But this "flesh" is not only passions of the flesh! This irrationality is the mad drive within us that is both in the body and in the soul. The Church never teaches us that it is only our flesh which is fallen. It is our *nature* which is fallen. These maddening desires of ours are,

except for God's grace, out of control not only in our bodily urges but in the urges of our spirit, of our minds and of our wills.

Over the years, the Church has found a convenient synthesis in what we call the Seven Capital Sins. So they are sins, when we give in to them. But more accurately, they are the seven major drives or tendencies that all of us have. They are not, of themselves, sins. No matter how strong or demanding they may be, no matter how urgent, they become sins only if, when, and insofar as we give in to them. The only two people we are absolutely sure did not have these drives are the Son of God in human form and the Immaculate Mother. But all of us have these urges and desires. They are the result of Original Sin. And for reasons best known to Divine Providence, though we are justified and in God's grace, nevertheless the drives still remain as long as we are in this valley of tears.

I want to bring out a very important principle of the spiritual life and something that we should take stock of seriously. We should ask ourselves before God daily:

- "Which among these tendencies has been dominant today?"
- To which of these tendencies of my fallen nature have I succumbed often and perhaps quite unobtrusively, so no one else knows except God and I?"
- Which of these temptations are not only in the body but, far more subtly, are in the spirit?"

When sins of the flesh are involved—not necessarily crude sins of the flesh, but just weaknesses of the flesh—they are usually obvious. The flesh being visible, we see it and others do too, either doing something or not doing something it should. But when it is the spirit that is not perfectly responsive to the will of God, it takes extraordinary clarity of mind and ruthlessness with one's self and honesty with God to admit we have sinned in having given in, in greater or lesser measure, to such temptations. These are not even fully conscious deliberate sins, but the sins to which we are all naturally prone.

Third, temptation by the devil. Finally, *the devil*. Regarding temptations of the evil spirit, we should keep certain truths of our faith in mind, particularly as seen in the light of Christ's own temptation by the evil spirit. [Matthew 4:1-11]

Truth #1. No one is spared temptations by the devil

No one is spared temptations by the devil. This is a universal principle of Christianity, because if Christ was tempted by the evil spirit, we may be sure that every other human being will undergo the same trial. Therefore, we may have no complacency. And no matter how preserved one may think he or she is from the world, we are never totally free. But let us suppose we think that somehow we have mastered the temptations which arise from our own passions of body or spirit. The one thing that we can never think we have finished is the contest against the devil. This is one of the main reasons why the Church is so concerned until the dying person has gasped his last breath, praying that the person might be delivered from the evil spirit. No one is spared.

Truth #2. The devil tempts us on three levels of body and soul

The devil tempts us on three levels of our being. We can now reflect on Christ's own triad of temptations.

1. He tempts us first of all on the level of our *weaknesses of the flesh*. "Tempt" here has the connotation of trying something out, like pulling and tugging to see if it gives. The devil knows that we have weaknesses of the flesh, so he is testing, testing, to find out what is our particular weakness. Notice that it is not just weaknesses in general or in the abstract. Our moods change, so we may be tempted to certain things in the morning that we would never give in to at night. He tempts our weaknesses in our appetites for food, drink, sex, sloth and possessions which cater to the body. That is quite an extent—no wonder there are so many devils!
2. The devil also tempts us on the level of our *selfishness of spirit*. The horror of crimes of the spirit is that they are not

crimes of weakness; they are crimes of strength. These are notably our tendency to anger, envy and avarice.

3. He tempts us on the level of our *desire for power*. We need not have read a lot of Nietzsche or have studied much philosophy to recognize this drive. All we have to do is deal with human beings. We should not think of this desire for power as a masculine temptation. Among the persons who, given the chance and having lost their self-control, can be positively luciferian in their desire for power are some women. Here, the evil spirit tempts our pride and unwillingness to be subject to others or to be considered less than someone else.

Truth #3. To cope with the evil spirits, resist immediately

In order to cope with the evil spirits, we have to follow Christ's example. He resisted immediately. Christ did not have to pray. Being all-holy, He did not have to pray and ask God for aid to overcome His fallen nature. [For, of course, He did not have a fallen nature.] He didn't have to allow Himself to be tempted by the devil, but He did to teach us that we should expect the same. This presumes that we can recognize the evil spirit and his temptations so as not to dally with them, because if we do, the likelihood is that he will outwit us. Christ has taught us that we must resist promptly.

Truth #4. Resist the devil with prayer and trust in God

Finally, the Apostle Matthew tells us we must resist the devil "strong in faith," using those powers at our disposal, *especially prayer and trust in God*. No matter how much we may be beset by the temptations of the evil spirit, we must not lose confidence. We must also call upon the resources of faith on the first two levels of temptation — those *from the world* (or the temptation from outside of us, from human agencies); and those *from the flesh* (which covers temptation in both the body and in the soul from our fallen human nature).

Nevertheless, somehow we may feel that we are a match for these temptations. But with the devil we know we are no match, and consequently, it is not a question of just outwitting the devil or outsmarting him or foolishly allowing ourselves to tangle with him and then wrestle with him. He is too strong; he is too shrewd. We must, therefore, call upon divine assistance, *first for light* so that we might recognize when we are being deceived by the evil one; and then, if the temptation is upon us and we recognize it is the devil, we must not panic or be frightened, but admit, "I cannot overcome him by myself, but I trust in the grace that God will give me, provided I ask Him."

The devil is strong, but the most important thing to remember is that the devil is deceptive. Consequently, when we pray in the closing of *The Lord's Prayer*, "deliver us from evil," we should understand this to include especially "deliver us from the evil one's deceits," meaning that we are asking for the grace to see. If there is anywhere that the Gospel invocation "O Lord, that I may see" applies, it is here.

O Lord, that I may see that it is not the grace of God, but the enemy of God, who may hide as an angel of light and who is trying to beguile me; that I may see this enemy and then, like Christ and with Christ, be confident that, because Christ has called me to follow Him, He will give me the grace to resist even as He did, having recognized the devil for what he is.

Copyright © 1998 Inter Mirifica
Used with permission.

Discernment of Spirits by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

Transcript of a conference given to the Handmaids of the Precious Blood, Cor Jesu Monastery, Jemez Springs, NM. Available from The Real Presence website:

http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Discernment/Discernment_002.htm

How to recognize God's voice from the seductions of the evil one

I might begin by observing that the full rendering of this statement is, "Discernment of Spirits" implying a plurality and especially implying a distinction between one kind of spirit and another. We know from both the teaching of the Church and by now our own experience that serving God and following Christ is not all just a straight, easy, smooth path. It involves, by its very definition (and Christ went out of His way to impress us with the fact)...*conflict*. The conflict, moreover, is not only with or within ourselves or with the world (with human beings outside of us), but also and mainly for our purpose, a conflict with the evil spirits. We further know on faith that the evil spirit, while he cannot (and God will never permit him to) coerce our wills, he can surely test or tempt the weaknesses we have. He then can exploit our passions. He can most certainly use other human beings, as he often does, to lead us into temptation.

All the while that we say this however, we know that God's grace is also and more than correspondingly active in our souls, impelling and inviting us to the practice of virtue. Given these two dialectic expressions, that on the one hand we are being tempted by the evil spirits, on the other hand we are being invited by God's grace. Realizing that life is lived concretely, it is most important for us to be able to recognize the one impulse from the other. In other words, to be able to distinguish *inspiration* from *instigation*, or if you wish, *grace* from *temptation*. So as, of course, to be able to respond to the one and resist the other.

I firmly believe that many of the critical problems today are due not so much to ill will, or malice, but to a failure in discernment, in people not being able to distinguish between the one impulse and the other. And afterwards, once they are caught in the web of demonic temptation, it becomes very difficult to extricate oneself. In the

present meditation, let us reflect on how we can be more alert to the two ways in which we are being, as it were, worked upon. The two kinds of spirits that either wish to draw us closer to God because the Spirit comes from God, or away from God because it is the instigation of the sworn enemy of the Creator. I think we can synthesize the "how," that is, the how we can become more alert to being able to discern between the two. We can synthesize this "how" in three words: *attitude, peace and confidence*.

1. Attitude of will—readiness to do God's will (Rule 2)

We begin then with *attitude*. An almost undefinable word, but we know pretty well what it means. In order, then, to be properly disposed for recognizing temptations and distinguishing them from graces, the first indispensable precondition is the proper attitude, and it is an *attitude of will*. Let me sort of repeat myself. There are certain conditions that God requires for our being able to, well, recognize anything in the spiritual life. How often both the Old and the New Testaments talk about being properly disposed in heart. Here then, this *attitude of will*, which I am going to describe, is the atmosphere or situation in which I must either be (and if I am not, into which I must predispose myself) in order that I might have the grace to be able to distinguish. You see how we need grace even to distinguish grace from its opposite, temptation!

What does this proper *attitude of will* concretely consist in? It means an honest and sincere desire to do God's will. Notice I have duplicated the adjectives, honest and sincere, and I might have added three more adjectives. To make sure that we are not just talking about a desire to do God's will, but to make absolutely certain that our attitude is *honest, sincere, real, authentic and genuine*. And as with all things of the spirit, all we can do is talk about them and hope that, with God's grace, either what we hear or what we read will register, and He decides whether it does. All

I can do or say in this context is, well, beat the molecules of the air with syllables.

I wish to stress the honesty, the sincerity, the genuineness. Maybe I have sinned. Maybe I am still sinning. Maybe I have not been all that I should have been. Frankly, and there is no *maybe* about this. I am not all that I should be. Maybe there is in my life a lot to improve and I hardly know where to start. Maybe there are things that should be uprooted from my life. And again, where do we begin?

I watched one of the workmen yesterday pulling weeds. I looked beyond him, and I saw an acre. Well, at least he was pulling weeds. I don't know when he will finish. If we have more rain, I guess he'll have to just start all over again. Nevertheless, I can, with God's help, decide (and it is a decision and not all people make this decision) that I – with a stress on that perpendicular pronoun, "I" – want to do what God wants. If I look too closely at myself, I panic. Notwithstanding, if I really want to do God's will – (and there is no cheating here, it is a deep down interior sincerity) – then I am prepared to cope with temptations. Where the beginning to cope is this matter of being able to recognize when I am being tempted by the evil spirit and when I am being led by God, then I am also correspondingly ready to respond to God's invitation.

I could spend not the few minutes that I am dwelling on this point here. I could spend a week drawing on all sorts of places in God's Revelation (and...centuries of the Church's ascetical and spiritual teaching), on the absolute indispensability of complete naked honesty with God. If I am that honest, no matter what my past has been or my present is, my future is secure, because then I will be given the corresponding light to recognize *temptation* from *inspiration*. And you notice that it is light that we first need. God gives His light, and here is where that beatitude is the diamond in the center of the spiritual life, the pure of heart – where purity here means absolute honesty – they shall see God. They will be able to recognize Him when He speaks and distinguish His voice from the seductions of the evil one.

A retreat time is mainly this: it is the beginning in the nature of things of what is supposed to follow

after the retreat is over. A retreat is not a time of inventory, except insofar as that may help to do this. I am to prepare myself for such future as God still gives me. I am, then, to do three things:

- First, find out WHAT God wants me to do. As I tell my students, "If you want to be really clear when you teach, use monosyllables." I didn't plan this, but look: find-out-what-God-wants-me-to-do. But the predisposition necessary for me to know what He wants me to do is this utter openness and readiness. With Samuel, I must say, "Lord, speak. Your servant is listening." Watch the accents in God's revelation: "I am listening."
- Second, resolve on WHY I want to do what He wants me to do. You might say, "Well, why bother with that?" Because it is not enough to know *what* God wants me to do. If I am going to do it, I've got to be motivated, and we don't do anything, we don't wash our faces, unless we have a reason . . . We have got to have a reason for doing things, because unless I am strongly motivated, and not just initial motivation, although that is most important psychologically. Pastoral theologians say the most important motivation is when I make the resolution. And that can carry me through a lifetime, if need be. But something I can go back to and keep telling myself, "Why are you doing it?" "This is why."
- So the first is the WHAT, and the second is the WHY. But then decide on HOW I will carry it into effect. Methodology, then, has a lot to do with not just making resolutions but, what is far more important, keeping them. This I think is also the heart of genuine sincerity. If I am not only willing to do what God wants me to do, but I am willing to take the means, ah, that's the crunch! Because it is the means that will cost. It's the overcoming perhaps of something I have been accustomed to do for years. Habits are not easily broken.

I was taught by the Marianist Brothers. I think it was my junior year of high school that one of the Brothers in religion class,

on a clean blackboard, printed the word, “habit.” Then, to impress us how important it is to cultivate good habits and how bad it is to get into evil habits, that a habit is hard to acquire if it is a good one, and hard to break if it is a bad one.... I have forgotten so much of what I learned in high school, but I have never forgotten that.

He said, “Fellows don’t acquire bad habits, because if you have a bad habit you work at it and you work at it and...” Then he erased the “h,” and said, “You still have “abit.” Then he said, “You work at it and you work...” He then erased the “a,” and said, “You still have a “bit.” Then he said, “You still work, you struggle and you strive.” And then he erased the “b” and said, “You still have, “it.”

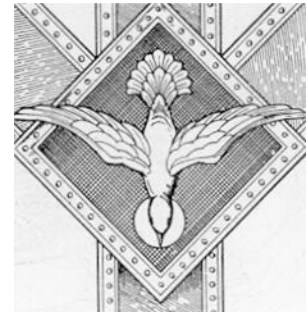
Consequently, it is the means that are going to be costly. And the index of our honesty is our willingness before God to take the means, knowing full well they are going to cost.

2. Peace – the sound of grace (Rule 3)

Peace. One of the best, in fact, THE BEST way of distinguishing between temptations and graces is to find out whether they bring *peace* or *anxiety* to my soul. I cannot tell you how important in my own life has been what I will share with you in the next ten or so minutes. In the nature of things, no matter how equipped you may be with Spiritual Directors, you don’t have access to that much immediate, ready at-hand, human spiritual direction.

Let’s not forget that the principal Director of our soul dwells within our hearts. This is the way He directs us: When He speaks and when we wish to know whether it is He who is leading us, and not His enemy trying to mislead us, let’s remind ourselves that the *sound* of grace is peace. The *form* of grace is peace. The *taste* of grace is peace. The *effect* of grace is peace, or summarily the *name* of grace is peace.

It is not a casual title of Christ when we call Him the “Prince of Peace.” It was not a coincidence but a divinely-foreordained plan from eternity that His first words the moment that He rose from the dead, having redeemed the world on the Cross, that He commanded His disciples (and that means us), “Peace be with you.”



On the other hand, temptations of the evil spirit are the opposite. The evil spirit causes confusion, doubt, insecurity, despondency, anxiety, worry and, if we allow him, despair. Is it any wonder that Saint John, under divine inspiration, should simply distinguish the Word of God by calling Him, “The Light,” and identified the evil spirit as the “Prince of Darkness.”

We know what happens when we are in darkness. We grope, we stumble, we don’t want to move. All our muscles and all our faculties are intact, but darkness paralyzes us. We dare not move because we don’t know where we are going. Reread, re-meditate on those passages especially in John, the Master Evangelist of Discernment of Spirits, from the beginning of his Gospel through his letters and his *Apocalypse*.

Notice of course, that there must have been, and that is why I anticipated what I am saying now, there must be the previous attitude of our readiness to do God’s will. Otherwise, we cannot be sure, and God will not allow us to be that clear in recognizing Him. How many times Jesus, remember, in speaking to the crowds, said, “Why do you not listen to me?” Talk about grace! This was the Son of God talking infinite truth, speaking to men. You know what He told them? “Because your hearts are not right.” Am I clear? It is the right disposition of soul that is needed.

Sin or no sin in the past, and we have all got it. We are all sinners. We are all the same; it is only a matter of degree of sinfulness. But that utter sincerity, the willingness of soul and then what miracles Christ worked. Remember? Miracles in the body, in order to reach the spirit. He’ll work

the same in us provided we are disposed, ready and willing. Lord, speak!

Notice too, lest we forget, that this peace may involve suffering. It will surely involve effort. It will involve trial and of course, the cross. Who said *peace of soul* is incompatible with the cross? Incompatible – that is what the Beatitudes are all about. It is those eight humanly-speaking incompatibilities; substitute peace for happiness and you got it.

3. Confidence and trust in God (Rule 7)

Finally, confidence. The last element in reflecting on this very crucial element in the religious life is great confidence in God that He does not deceive His elect. If the precondition for being able to distinguish inspiration from temptation is the ready willingness to do God's will (the sustained attitude), once we know *what* God wants us to do, having motivated ourselves as to *why* He wants us to do it, and having, with His grace, found out *how* we should carry it into effect, the sustained post-condition which must continue is *confidence*. Otherwise, we are going to weaken. Our knees are going to give in. Christ told us, and this is the source of our confidence, "Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid."

Now the next one. "You believe in God," where the word, "believe," in Greek, is: *you trust in God, trust in Me*. He wants us to trust Him implicitly. This is the guarantee of perseverance

in His grace once we have discovered that it is His grace.

Once, then, we have decided what God wants, we are to go ahead. He warns us not to look back, which I sometimes paraphrase: not to look inside. Not to look at ourselves or re-examine what we have done, but trust implicitly. You see, and the saints are all eloquent in telling us this: "God treats His friends kindly." He will never inspire us to do more than, with His grace, we can carry through.

Lord Jesus, make me open to your grace. Let me trust You since I know I cannot trust myself. But, very well, since You told me to trust, because You have overcome the world, why shouldn't I, hand-in-hand with You, trust that I too, with Your grace, will overcome not only the world or the devil, but also my own inclinations?

This is the key to spiritual growth. Complete honesty with God, then doing what we know He wants us to do, and then letting go, trusting Him that He will not fail us.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Copyright © 1998 Inter Mirifica.
Used with permission.

Summary of the 14 Rules for Discernment of Spirits-(help for overcoming spiritual desolation). The Rules are for becoming aware and understanding, to some extent the different spiritual movements which are caused in the soul, the good to accept them, and the bad to reject them.

How do the spirits act?

Rule 1—In persons living a sinful life, going from one sin to another: the evil spirit fills the imagination with sensual delights and pleasures, proposing inordinate desires in order to hold them all the more and make them grow in their vices and sins: whereas the Holy Spirit disturbs the conscience, causing uneasiness, worry over past life, fear of death and anxiety in order to stir up the desire to change.

Rule 2—In persons living a holy life, moving away from sin and seeking to grow in the service of God, the Holy Spirit consoles, granting consolation and holy inspirations, courage, quiet, easing and taking away obstacles to strengthen the movement toward God. In this situation the evil spirit disturbs, giving desolation and unholy instigations to weaken the movement toward God.

What is spiritual consolation?

Rule 3—In times of spiritual consolation, the Holy Spirit counsels and guides. Spiritual consolation is an uplifting movement of the heart—a warm, peaceful experience of God which strengthens, energizes and gives joy to our hearts. We feel loved by God and are inflamed with love for Him. The struggles that come with serving Him fade. There might be a perceptible increase in the virtues of faith, hope and charity, a spiritual joy accompanied by attraction to heavenly things, tears of love for God, courage, strength, inner peace, quiet and rest in the Lord. The duration of spiritual consolation will vary in each instance. Thoughts that arise from spiritual consolation are to be accepted and enjoyed.

What is spiritual desolation?

Rule 4—In times of spiritual desolation, the enemy counsels and guides. Spiritual desolation is a downward or heavy movement of the heart. One feels sad, discouraged, discontent, and simply has no energy for spiritual things. It is difficult to pray and we feel separated and abandoned by God. Such times of trial can be filled with confusion. We often feel pulled to low and earthly things (like unnecessarily running to the refrigerator or to whatever else we think might please us), we have a loss of peace, a lack of hope and love, and a distaste for all the things of God. We are harassed with false obstacles backed by false reasonings, which appear quite real at the time. The duration of spiritual desolation will vary in each instance. Thoughts that arise from spiritual desolation are to be rejected. Whenever you find yourself thinking negatively or saying to yourself, “I can’t, I can’t, I can’t pray, I can’t teach, I can’t...” do whatever spiritual thing it is, recognize these as temptations from the enemy and promptly reject them. A good habit to develop is to listen to what we say to ourselves; the enemy is at work in negative self-talk. Watch for universal negatives and claims over the past and future, such as, “everything is entirely worthless,” “it always has been and always will be,” or “I never have and never will.” These and anything that is uncharitable toward yourself or someone else is from the enemy.

What not to do while in spiritual desolation (Rule 5)

Rule 5—Never change in desolation, a decision made in consolation. Stay with the spiritual proposals that you’ve planned; do not make new spiritual decisions in times of desolation. Ask two questions, if both are yes, do not change a spiritual proposal: 1) Are you in spiritual desolation? 2) Are you considering changing a spiritual proposal? There is never a time when we should change spiritual proposals during periods of spiritual desolation. Persevere and continue with what you had planned before the desolation. (But do remember that in times of non-spiritual desolation you may need to make some healthy life-style changes.)

What to do while in spiritual desolation (Rules 6-9)

Rule 6—In times of spiritual desolation, pray for the grace to intensify your efforts against the desolation. Pray more, cry out and petition for God’s help, meditate on Scripture passages that help you focus on God’s faithful love for you (keep a list of favorite passages, sing a favorite spiritual song or watch a familiar uplifting movie), examine the possible causes of the desolation, and perform some suitable penance as a means of rejecting the desolation. (Choose something that acts against the specific desolation, e.g., when tempted to shorten prayer time, pray for five extra minutes. Do something for someone else, even if you don’t feel like it—perhaps a simple act of charity or even just a smile.) Remember Rule 5; DO NOT abandon any of your spiritual plans or practices.

Rule 7—Recognize that desolation is a trial allowed by God in order to strengthen your soul and that with divine help YOU CAN resist the enemy’s agitations and temptations. Maintain your trust in God and His loving

Providence. Be anchored in hope, remember past favors and graces received. Take comfort in knowing that God never allows more than we can take and always supplies sufficient grace.

Begin praising and thanking the Lord, even in the midst of the trial, for His abundant supporting grace. An attitude of gratitude, though seemingly counterintuitive at this time, is a powerful tool against the enemy because he cannot remain in an atmosphere of gratitude to God. A simple, “Thank you, Jesus,” will suffice and put us on the path of thanksgiving. (See *1 Thessalonians* 5:18, *Philippians* 4:6-7, *Acts* 16:22-34.) Remember, thoughts matter in the spiritual life; choose, on purpose, to focus on holy thoughts.

Rule 8—Work to be patient in times of spiritual desolation. Pray for patience while carrying on with the work at hand, don’t give up, think about this trial as being permitted by God for your spiritual growth. Believe that the time of consolation will return SOON. Reflect on previous times of consolation, remembering that God has brought you through times of desolation before.

Rule 9—Seek the cause of the desolation. God Who loves me, allows spiritual desolation for one of three reasons: 1) my failure to live the life of faith in some way; 2) as a trial to stimulate my spiritual growth; 3) as a lesson that spiritual consolation is totally a gift from God and not an entitlement, allowing me to experience a spiritually rich humility.

Preparing for spiritual desolation before it begins (Rules 10-11)

Rule 10—In times of spiritual consolation, first accept and enjoy the grace-filled time. Then, write down the experience of consolation to store it up for future experiences of desolation. Think now about how to combat future occurrences of desolation—as the consolation seems to diminish, 1) pray for help in areas most susceptible to attack by the enemy; 2) meditate on uplifting Scripture passages that touch your heart with God’s love (see your list under Rule 6 and keep adding to it); 3) think of the spiritual growth you will gain from resisting desolation: an increase in the virtues of patience, perseverance, trust, etc.; 4) think of the growth you have already gained, buoying yourself up for the future; 5) remember not to make any changes when in desolation; consider the negative consequences you experienced when previously making a change in such circumstances; 6) review these 14 Rules for Discernment of Spirits; 7) think of circumstances that tend to take you into desolation and plan now how to appropriately respond to them.

Rule 11—Maintain a balance between a humble heart in times of consolation, lowering yourself when spiritually high, and a trusting heart in times of desolation, raising yourself when spiritually low:

- In consolation, cultivate a humble heart by developing an attitude of gratitude, recalling that consolation is a gift from God, Who is our only source of true strength. Pray often, “Thank you, Jesus.”
- In desolation, cultivate a trusting heart by calmly thinking of God’s providential guidance and sufficient grace to resist the enemy. Rely on the fact that you can resist and not on any feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and seeming abandonment you might experience. Pray often, “Jesus, I trust in You.”

(Thinking in such ways will not arise spontaneously; it must be intentional, and with continual use can become habitual.)

What to do when tempted (Rules 12-13)

Rule 12—Stand firm and resist temptation at its beginnings. “Nip it in the bud,” and do not allow it to “snowball” (These “snowballs” can eventually attack our very vocation). Turn very quickly to prayer. Do the opposite of what the enemy suggests. The enemy is essentially weak and will flee when strongly resisted but gains strength when indulged (like a spoiled child).

Rule 13—Bring temptations out into the open, never keep them a secret. The enemy tempts with spiritual confusion, discouragement, etc.; at the same time, he says, “keep it a secret.” Share these experiences with a Director/Confessor who is familiar with the enemy’s deceptions, this will help break the enemy’s hold on you. Are you thinking, “He’s too busy,” “He won’t understand,” or perhaps, “He will look down on me if I share this.” If so, this is the exact thing you should share.

Preemptive action to take (Rule 14)

Rule 14—Know the weakest point in your spiritual life and work to strengthen it—Know Thyself! The enemy looks at all the different human and spiritual aspects of our life and attacks where he finds us weakest, attempting to divert our prayer, service, life of charity, etc. If you find yourself thinking, “This always happens to me,” or “This is the same old problem, situation, discouragement, etc.”—stop, take notice and look for weaknesses. We all have weak points. Knowing and strengthening our human and spiritual points of vulnerability will help defeat the enemy’s attack before he even begins.

(For a more detailed explanation, as well as precise and practical examples, of each of these 14 Rules see Father Timothy M. Gallagher's book, *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living*.)

Saint Ignatius counsels that when we are spiritually burdened by the enemy's wiles and seductions, if we follow the Rules and speak to a Director who is familiar with the enemy's deceptions, we will gain freedom from the enemy's hold.

Saint Ignatius' original text of the 14 Rules

Rules for becoming aware and understanding to some extent the different movements which are caused in the soul, the good, to receive them, and the bad to reject them. And these rules are more proper for the first week. (313)

Rule 1—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 1: *In the case of those who go from one mortal sin to another, the enemy is ordinarily accustomed to propose apparent pleasures. He fills their imagination with sensual delights and gratifications, the more readily to keep them in their vices and increase the number of their sins. With such persons the good spirit uses a method which is the reverse of the above. Making use of the light of reason, he will rouse the sting of conscience and fill them with remorse.*

Rule 2—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 2: *In the case of those who go on earnestly striving to cleanse their souls from sin and who seek to rise in the service of God our Lord to greater perfection, the method pursued is the opposite of that mentioned in the first rule. Then it is characteristic of the evil spirit to harass with anxiety, to afflict with sadness, to raise obstacles backed by fallacious reasonings that disturb the soul. Thus he seeks to prevent the soul from advancing. It is characteristic of the good spirit, however, to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This He does by making all easy, by removing all obstacles so that the soul goes forward in doing good.*

Rule 3—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 3: *I call it consolation when an interior movement is aroused in the soul, by which it is inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord, and as a consequence, can love no creature on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the Creator of them all. It is likewise consolation when one sheds tears that move to the love of God, whether it be because of sorrow for sins, or because of the sufferings of Christ our Lord, or for any other reason that is immediately directed to the praise and service of God. Finally, I call consolation every increase of faith, hope, and love, and all interior joy that invites and attracts to what is heavenly and to the salvation of one's soul by filling it with peace and quiet in its Creator and Lord.*

Rule 4—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 4: *I call desolation what is entirely the opposite of what is described in the third rule, as darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit, inclination to what is low and earthly, restlessness rising from many disturbances and temptations which lead to [lack] of faith, [lack] of hope, [lack] of love. The soul is wholly slothful, tepid, sad, and separated, as it were, from its Creator and Lord. For just as consolation is the opposite of desolation, so the thoughts that spring from consolation are the opposite of those that spring from desolation.*

Rule 5—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 5: *In time of desolation we should never make any change, but remain firm and constant in the resolution and decision which guided us the day before the desolation, or in the decision to which we adhered in the preceding consolation. For just as in consolation the good spirit guides and counsels us, so in desolation the evil spirit guides and counsels. Following his counsels we can never find the way to a right decision.*

Rule 6—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 6: *Though in desolation we must never change our former resolution, it will be very advantageous to intensify our activity against the desolation. We can insist more upon prayer, upon meditation, and on much examination of ourselves. We can make an effort in a suitable way to do some penance.*

Rule 7—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 7: *When one is in desolation, he should be mindful that God has left him to his natural powers to resist the different agitations and temptations of the enemy in order to try him. He can resist with the help of God, which always remains, though he may not clearly perceive it. For though God has taken from him the abundance of fervor and overflowing love and the intensity of His favors, nevertheless, he has sufficient grace for eternal salvation.*

Rule 8—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 8: *When one is in desolation, he should strive to persevere in patience. This reacts against the vexations that have overtaken him. Let him consider, too, that consolation will soon return, and in the meantime, he must diligently use the means against desolation which have been given in the sixth rule.*

Rule 9—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 9: *The principal reasons why we suffer from desolation are three: The first is because we have been tepid and slothful or negligent in our exercises of piety, and so through our own fault spiritual consolation has been taken away from us. The second reason is because God wishes to try us, to see how much we are worth, and how much we will advance in His service and praise when left without the generous reward of consolations and signal favors. The third reason is because God wishes to give us a true knowledge and understanding of ourselves, so that we may have an intimate perception of the fact that it is not within our power to acquire and attain great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation; but that all this is the gift and grace of God our Lord. God does not wish us to build on the property of another, to rise up in spirit in a certain pride and vainglory and attribute to ourselves the devotion and other effects of spiritual consolation.*

Rules 10 and 11—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 10 and Rule 11: #10. *When one enjoys consolation, let him consider how he will conduct himself during the time of ensuing desolation, and store up a supply of strength as defense against that day. #11. He who enjoys consolation should take care to humble himself and lower himself as much as possible. Let him recall how little he is able to do in time of desolation, when he is left without such grace or consolation. On the other hand, one who suffers desolation should remember that by making use of the sufficient grace offered him, he can do much to withstand all his enemies. Let him find his strength in his Creator and Lord.*

Rule 12—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 12: *The enemy conducts himself as a woman. He is a weakling before a show of strength, and a tyrant if he has his will. [The enemy can also be compared to a spoiled child who is a tyrant if indulged but if reprimanded at the beginning of some misbehavior will lose courage and submit his will to the will of his parents. If not resisted, the behavior will have a snowball effect, increasing in strength and size.]*

Rule 13—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 13: *Our enemy may also be compared in his manner of acting to a false lover. He seeks to remain hidden and does not want to be discovered. If such a lover speaks with evil intention to the daughter of a good father, or to the wife of a good husband, and seeks to seduce them, he wants his words and solicitations kept secret. . . . In the same way, when the enemy of our human nature tempts a just soul with his wiles and seductions, he earnestly desires that they be received secretly and kept secret. But if one manifests them to a confessor, or to some other spiritual person who understands his deceptions and malicious designs, the evil one is very much vexed. For he knows that he cannot succeed in his evil undertaking, once his evident deceptions have been revealed.*

Rule 14—Saint Ignatius' text for Rule 14: *The conduct of our enemy may also be compared to the tactics of a leader intent upon seizing and plundering a position he desires. A commander and leader of an army will encamp, explore the fortifications and defenses of the stronghold, and attack at the weakest point. In the same way, the enemy of our human nature investigates from every side all our virtues, theological, cardinal, and moral. Where he finds the defenses of eternal salvation weakest and most deficient, there he attacks and tries to take us by storm.*

Appendix

Prayer and Divine Reading (*Lectio Divina*)

by Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke, D.D., J.C.D.

International Director of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

March 12, 2004

Prayer

Prayer is the fount at which we nourish our Christian life. Prayer, which is—in simplest terms—conversation with God, is our source of inspiration and strength for living in Christ each day. In his apostolic letter, "At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*), our Holy Father Pope John Paul II reminds us that growth in holiness is marked, above all, by prayer: "Prayer develops that conversation with Christ which makes us His intimate friends" (n. 32a).

The Holy Eucharist

The high point of our prayer is the Holy Eucharist and Penance. Through the Holy Eucharist, we unite ourselves to Christ in the offering of His life for our salvation. We share, in the fullest way possible for us on this earth, in the life of



Christ who alone is our salvation. God our Father, through the overshadowing of our gifts of bread and wine by the Holy Spirit, transforms them into the Body and Blood of Christ as the spiritual food of our pilgrimage on earth and our passage from this world to the world which is to come. From participation in the Holy Eucharist comes a strong desire for daily communication with God through prayer and devotion. In the same way, in our daily prayer and devotions we anticipate, with longing, sacramental communion with Christ.

With regard to daily prayer and devotion, I commend once again the enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in our homes and also, when possible, in our places of work and recreation. Beholding the image of the Heart of Jesus, our minds and hearts turn to Him in the Holy Eucharist and we spontaneously renew the

union of our poor hearts with His Most Sacred Heart, finding in His Heart rest, strength and peace.

The Sacrament of Penance

The Sacrament of Penance is also the high point in our prayer life. The closer we draw to Christ in prayer, especially participation in the Holy Eucharist, the more we recognize our own sinfulness and long to speak our sorrow to Christ and to receive His forgiveness. Christ, who knows our minds and hearts much better than we ourselves do, wanted us to have the sacramental means of confession of sins and reception of God's forgiveness. After His Resurrection from the dead, He appeared to the Apostles in the Cenacle and conferred upon them the power to hear the confession of sins and to forgive them in Christ's name. He breathed the Holy Spirit upon them and spoke these words: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound" (*John 20:22-23*). In our daily prayer, especially our *Examination of Conscience* and praying of the *Act of Contrition*

each evening, we renew the sacramental confession of our sins and reception of forgiveness, and also prepare ourselves for our next Confession. The Sacrament of Penance or Confession is a most powerful tool for the purification and strengthening of our relationships with God, our neighbor and our world.

Lectio Divina

I commend to you a particular form of daily prayer. It is my hope that it may become, if it is not already, a part of your prayer each day. It is called *Lectio Divina* or divine reading. It is an especially effective means of communication with Our Lord, as you will soon see.

Lectio Divina, although it may sound difficult, is most simple. It centers on the divinely revealed Word of God in the Holy Scriptures. It also imitates the Sacred Liturgy, in which every sacred action is preceded by the reading of and meditation upon the Word of God. It is an efficacious form of prayer, for it leads us more deeply into the Sacred Scriptures and into participation in the Sacraments.

How does *Lectio Divina* work? It takes place in three steps. The first step is the prayerful reading of a passage from the Holy Scriptures. By prayerful, I mean two things. First, that we have put ourselves in the presence of God and put all other thoughts out of our mind before we begin to read the scriptural passage. Second, we are reading the text of the Scriptures in order to pray.

What text do we choose? Since the entirety of the Word of God is given to us for our inspiration, we can choose any passage from the Bible. For my part, I have found it particularly helpful to choose a text from one of the Gospels. For example, the *Gospel of Luke* makes an excellent font of *Lectio Divina*, for Saint Luke's Gospel underlines so strongly the Divine Mercy. It is good to do a continuous reading of one of the Gospels by choosing each day a passage for *Lectio Divina*. The passage chosen should be brief, so that we may thoroughly reflect upon it.

Having chosen the passage from the Sacred Scriptures, we read it carefully, attempting to understand the full meaning of the words. To do so will mean placing the passage within the context of the Gospel in which it appears. It may mean, too, reflecting upon the Church's interpretation of the text. For example, if I were to use the passage which I quoted above regarding the Sacrament of Penance for *Lectio Divina*, I would understand that it contains the words by which Our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Penance. After reflecting upon the true meaning of the text, the second step is to apply it to our own life. I ask the question: What do these words mean for me? The Word of God is given to us for our salvation, and, therefore, we must always apply the Word of God to our daily living. We know, as the Lord Himself testifies, the Word of God descends upon us as a gentle rain which always brings life and growth in us

spiritually (cf. *Is* 55:10-11). We should take the time to reflect on the many possible meanings of the text for our daily Christian living.

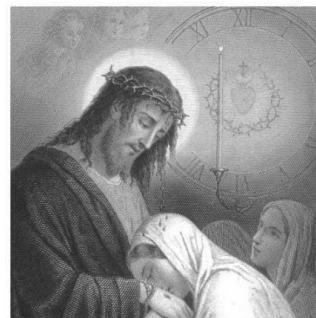
After having studied the meaning of the text and having applied the text to our daily living, the third step is to pause in silence before God, so that He may speak to us in our hearts. In other words, we are simply quiet, keeping the image of Christ before our eyes. In the silence, God will speak to our hearts, confirming us in our love of Him and drawing us forward in love. We should restrain our own thoughts and preoccupations, so that God may enter and communicate with us in the mysterious words of prayer.

Perhaps you are thinking that this must take a lot of time, which you do not have to spare. You may be wondering how this can be done within the busy schedule of your day. *Lectio Divina* does not require a long period of time. It can be done in 15 minutes each day. The important thing is to prepare well by choosing the passage from the holy Gospels, not taking too long a passage and by quieting oneself for prayer beforehand.

Lectio Divina is also like every good habit. If you work on it each day, you will develop a stronger and stronger habit of praying with Christ through the reading of the Word of God.

Conclusion

If you are not already doing so, I invite you to pray by way of *Lectio Divina* or divine reading. You will find it an excellent way to grow in your relationship with God and to find inspiration and strength for all of your other relationships. May your prayerful reading of and meditation upon the Word of God lead you to become more like Christ.



What is Spiritual Reading by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

Available on the Marian Catechist website at:

http://www.mariancatechist.com/spiritual_reading/index.html



We can begin by describing [spiritual reading] in terms of what it is not, and that is easy.

Spiritual reading is not secular reading. But more positively, spiritual reading is that reading whose purpose as writing is *to assist the believer* to better know, love, and serve God and thereby become more God-like, which means more holy, especially in his life of prayer and the practice of Christian virtue. Notice I said that spiritual reading is that reading whose purpose as writing is *to assist the believer*. Why put it just that way? Sounds odd! The reason is that there is a sense in which any kind of reading, even the most obviously secular, like the daily papers or a popular novel may, and by now I have been told, is considered spiritual reading when my purpose in reading is spiritual. By that standard, reading *Time* or *Newsweek* or worse, provided a person could say, “my purpose is spiritual,” makes it spiritual. Not so. You cannot canonize the secular.

I am not here then speaking of spiritual reading in that broad sense. Spiritual reading in our consideration is writing that was written with a spiritual purpose and not only one that may happen to be read with perhaps a religious intention in mind. Quite frankly, all our reading—even the most secular—should be spiritualized, but that is not the same as spiritual reading.

Concretely, the forms that this kind of spiritual reading can take are not as numerous as may seem. I will reduce them to five—just five: the Scriptures, or the Bible; the teachings of the Church, or Sacred Doctrine; the History of the Church in general, or any one of the myriad of aspects of the Church’s passage through time; biography, or the lives and thoughts of saintly persons, either by themselves or by someone else; then, in a class by itself, any kind of reflection on any of the preceding categories which may be learned or personal, scholarly or practical, or any combination of these. You will notice where I placed the last category—in the last place.

Why is Spiritual Reading Necessary?



Spiritual reading is necessary as the normal way of nourishing the Christian faith, which means getting food for the mind so that the will and affections might love and serve God

accordingly. I say the normal way, allowing for exceptions that simply prove the rule. We must take the ordinary means to preserve our physical life, and the obligation is a grave one. Among these ordinary means, none is more basic than food for the body. Without eating, the body dies. And it is no comfort to say I am alive now and there is food outside of me. Either that food gets inside of me or I die. Being near me is not enough. I can be surrounded by food and starve.

So too, we must take the ordinary means to preserve our supernatural life, and again the obligation is a grave one. Among these ordinary means, none is more basic than food for the mind to nourish the Faith. Without food for the mind, the Faith withers and dies. And there is no mental nourishment for the soul more available and accessible and providable than spiritual reading, as just described. Not to nourish the mind and, in the mind, the Faith with this food is to tempt Providence, which means to tempt God.

Pause for a moment to reflect on the millions of thought hours spent daily in a single large American city literally devouring the pabulum dished out in such truckloads to the people. Then ask yourself how many of these people spend one tenth of one percent of their *mind-life* a day reading, say, the inspired text of the Bible or the documents of the Church or the life of a saint, and you begin to see how urgently necessary it is to convince ourselves and those under our care that they must do spiritual reading. Otherwise, they will spiritually die, and they are dying.

If we further reflect on the other millions of, shall I call them *thought hours*, that people spend watching television or listening to the radio, the urgency of what we are saying becomes even more imperative. There must be, absolutely must be a steady diet of sound nourishment for the soul at the risk of losing one’s spiritual life, and that is the verdict of Christian history. However, this necessity is not only for survival, it is also and especially for spiritual growth. If I wish to have God on my mind during the day, I must read about God and what He has to say. That is why He spoke. It would, in effect, be telling God, “Well, I’ve heard that. Come to think of it, there are some writings they tell me You inspired. How

interesting!” And then not even pay God the courtesy of reading what He said.

If I wish to talk to God in humble and easy conversation I must read about what God is, what He has done and is doing in ages past and today, so that I might have something to talk about when I am in prayer. As we know now from experience the surest way of lapsing into silence is to enter a person’s company having nothing on my mind to say. If I wish to develop a strong Catholic Faith that is clear and sound and unalloyed, I must read what the Catholic Church teaches, since Her teaching comes to me especially in written form. But let me make sure I read what the Catholic Church teaches. If I read, which I should, what others tell me about what She teaches or explain to me either God’s Revelation or the Church’s doctrine, let me again make sure they are persons who themselves are faithful to the Church, and who love the Church. Not everyone who writes about the Church loves Her.

Moreover, if I wish to make sense of what is happening in the Church today I must read about what happened in the Church yesterday. If I am to be inspired by the Mystical Body of Christ, I must know this is not only the post-conciliar territory in which I live; it is not only that short span of time which I call today. The Mystical Body has a history. It has had centuries of suffering and persecution. It has struggled and fought with error, and has marvelously not only survived, but thrived, on opposition. If I am to be strong in my faith in this century, I’d better know something about what the Faith of believers before me taught them. Otherwise, as so many are doing today, we are liable to barter our Faith for a mess of pottage (*Genesis 25:29-34*). All of this means I must read the history of the Mystical Body and identify myself in spirit with the by now millions who have believed

before me, with the hundreds of thousands who shed their blood in defense of the Faith that I treasure. I will thus be inspired to do my share in preserving and extending and nourishing the Faith by laboring in the Church’s apostolate.

If I wish to become holy, I must read about holy people. Their faith will strengthen mine. Their trust in Divine Providence will encourage mine. Above all, their victory over self, the world and the evil spirit will spur me on to victory. How we need this encouragement! **Only saints reproduce saints.**

There is such a thing as supernatural genealogy. Unless I read the lives of saintly people, their sentiment, their trials and victories, how can they reproduce themselves in me?

I still have a few simple implications. By now one implication should be clear enough: **Who needs spiritual reading? Everyone who wants to become Christlike!** There is no choice. The Savior is not for nothing called the Word of God. We seldom think of Him as also—how I like the phrase—the *Written Word of God*, written in the Gospels which describe His life and in the apostolic writings His life inspired; *written* in the Church He founded and of which He continues as Her invisible Head; *written* in the saintly men and women who are faithful images of what their Master had been. This Master is unique. He not only teaches. He reproduces. All of this is ready to be read by us, if only we are willing to read. Christ, we are told by Saint John, is the Light that shines in the dark. And, if we are honest, we must admit how dark the darkness is. We need Him, the Light of our own world, to enlighten us about how we are to serve Him, so that we might love Him and bring others to love and serve Him too.

Copyright © 1998 Inter Mirifica. Used with permission.

How Spiritual Reading is to be Done

For this spiritual reading to be profitable, it must not be done hastily, or at a gallop, as when one reads stories, but very leisurely and attentively; for an impetuous flow of water or a heavy shower does not penetrate or fertilize the earth, but small, gentle rain; so for reading to enter and be drunk in by the heart, the reading must be done with pausing and pondering. – Alphonsus Rodriguez, S.J. (*Father Hardon’s Catholic Prayer Book*, p. 368)

Prayer before Spiritual Reading

Spirit of Wisdom, enlighten me to understand what I am about to read, and help me to put it into practice. Assist my memory to retain what You desire should later be used in the interests of charity and the work of the apostolate. Teach me to recognize in this reading an instrument of Your grace, directing my soul to greater union with You, and through me, the souls of others with whom I share what You wish me to learn. Amen. (*Father Hardon’s Catholic Prayer Book*, p. 270)

Ignatian Spirituality Today by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

Available from Real Presence website under above title
http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Saints/Saints_001.htm

It is just five hundred years since [Saint Ignatius'] birth in 1491 at the Castle of Loyola, Spain. During this half millennium, the Church has been under the most severe pressure since her foundation to conform to the world to which her Founder said He did not belong. Ignatius set down the conditions for preserving the Church's freedom from conformity.

By now a small library has been written about Ignatian spirituality. Literally millions of people have made the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. And for the past 450 years, the Society of Jesus, which he founded, has shared the Ignatian vision with whole nations that have come under its academic and pastoral influence.

For the sake of convenience, we may identify this vision with the six key meditations of the *Spiritual Exercises*. They are key meditations because they are the foundational truths of revelation on which depends not only our personal destiny, but the survival in time and into eternity of the whole of created humanity.

- The First Principle and Foundation
- The Call of Christ the King
- The Standards of Christ and Lucifer
- Three Classes of People
- Three Degrees of Humility
- The Election

Saint Ignatius built his approach to the spiritual life on these six premises. Together they form what Pope Pius XI called "the plan" which has "the greatest efficacy for dispelling the most stubborn difficulties which now confront human society" (Apostolic Constitution, *Menti Nostrae*, July 25, 1922).

Day 1: The First Principle and Foundation



(Supplemental Reading for Day 1)

Saint Ignatius may be called a genius in finality. For him, everything in the world has a purpose. This purpose is to glorify the Divine Majesty. That is why God created man, so that he might "praise, reverence and serve" his Creator, and thereby save his soul. That is also why God made the other things on the face of the earth, "in order to help man attain the end for which he was created."

Given these facts, we are to use everything in our lives according to the will of God, which means as a means to reach our heavenly destiny. However, while everything in our life is somehow part of God's Providence, not everything is to be used in the same way.

- Some of these creatures are to be enjoyed. We are doing God's will if we gratefully enjoy the pleasant persons, places and things that He puts into our lives.
- Other creatures God wants us to endure. Then we are doing His will when we patiently accept the pain He gives us and see His loving purpose in the unpleasant experiences which He provides us on the road to Heaven.
- Still other creatures God allows so we might remove them from our lives because they are occasions to sin. We must therefore rid ourselves of them if we hope to be saved.
- Finally, there are pleasant things that we may legitimately keep. But God would be more pleased if we gave them up out of love for Him. These are the sacrifices, which make us more like Jesus who, having joy set before Him, chose the Cross out of love for us.

There is a problem, of course. We are not naturally inclined to choose only what is morally—what is providentially—good for us. Nor are we naturally inclined to remove what is morally—that is eternally—bad for us. We live by faith, so that our minds need to be enlightened by divine revelation. And we have a fallen human nature, which is constantly in need of divine grace. Therefore, "we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibitions." As far as we are concerned, we should not, for example, prefer health to sickness, wealth to poverty, praise or honor to rejection or disgrace, a long life to a short life. In a word, we must become internally detached from all created things. Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we were created.

All of Ignatian spirituality is locked up in the foregoing summary of the "First Principle and

Foundation." It is a first principle for the believing mind to accept, and it is the foundation on which a truly Christian spiritual life must be built.

Saint Ignatius learned from personal experience that we must have a definite *goal* in life and decide on definite *means* to achieve it or we shall not only not reach the Beatific Vision for which God made us: we shall not even be happy here on earth. Sinners are unhappy people. If only they stopped to think of it, their very unhappiness is God's way of shaking them out of their stupor, if only they are willing to accept His terms for happiness and not stubbornly insist on their own.

On the other hand, those who are ready to guide their lives according to the plan of God are the only truly happy people on earth. They are at peace because, as the angel told the shepherds, they are "men of good will." Why *good will*? Because their wills are conformed to the will of God. They expect to suffer, and not run away from pain, because they are sustained by the light and strength that God always provides for those who ask Him.

That is why, throughout the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius insists on constantly praying for divine help. We would call them "actual graces" that we shall infallibly receive provided we incessantly pray. Our minds need to be enlightened all through life to keep them fixed on the horizon of eternity, toward which we are going, and to know at every conscious moment, how we are to get there. Our wills need to be constantly strengthened to remain firm in our resolution to keep doing the will of God. The most basic source of this light and strength is prayer.

Day 5: The Call of Christ the King



(Reading for Day 5, Meditation Hour #2)

Ignatian spirituality is unintelligible without seeing Christ as our King. The basis for this perspective is the Gospels. At the Annunciation, Mary was told that the Child she would conceive will be seated on the throne of Jacob, and His Kingdom will last forever. At the Crucifixion, the title on the Cross identified Jesus as *King of the Jews*. All the parables of the Savior are somehow related to the Kingdom of God and of Heaven. And always, Christ is their centerpiece as the King.

When God became man, absolutely speaking, He might have dispensed the graces of salvation to a sinful world without the cooperation of others. But He

decided not to do so. From the beginning of His public ministry, He called certain men not only to follow Him, but also to train them so they might be sent by Him to preach the Gospel to all nations.

This is the heart of Ignatian spirituality. Christ calls everyone to follow Him. They receive a vocation. But His purpose is to send them to spread His Kingdom. They are to receive a mission. On these terms, the following of Christ is both a means and an end. The means are to become more and more like Christ in the practice of virtue. The end is to save souls.

"It is My will to conquer the whole world and all My enemies, and thus to enter into the glory of My Father. Therefore, whoever wishes to join Me in this enterprise must be willing to labor with Me that by following Me in suffering, he may follow Me in glory." This is the summons of "Christ Our Lord the Eternal King, before Whom is assembled the whole world." He invites everyone to join with Him in the conquest of the human race. It is not a conquest by force, but of love. The Kingdom that He wants to extend is His Church Militant here on earth. It is also and finally to establish His Church Triumphant in eternal glory.

The invitation is clear. But it requires great generosity to be accepted: nothing less than following Christ in His way of the Cross as the condition for saving souls with Him, in a glorious eternity.

All the writings of Saint Ignatius bear out the same message. We are to cooperate with Christ by laboring and suffering like Him, in order to be effective channels of His grace to everyone whom His Providence places into our lives. The author of the *Spiritual Exercises* insists that the same basic law of reproduction exists in the supernatural as in the natural order. No less than *like reproduces like* in subhuman life, so *like reproduces like* among human beings. But this Law of Reproductivity holds also in the order of divine grace.

In His ordinary Providence, God uses people as channels of His grace to other people. This faith, Saint Paul tells us, comes by hearing. A believer in Christ must first speak, witnessing to his faith by word and action, in order that others might receive through him the grace to believe. So it goes with the whole of the Christian apostolate. In the measure that a person is following Christ in poverty and patience and

carrying his cross – to that degree will Christ use him as the instrument of His divine life.

It is not coincidental that Saint Francis Xavier, one of the first companions of Saint Ignatius, is the heavenly patron of the missions. When Xavier was sent by Ignatius to India, his directives were simply those of Christ, to conquer the Indies for the Kingdom of

Christ. As biographers point out, it was mainly Xavier's close imitation of the virtues of Jesus, which achieved such marvels of conversion. He personally baptized over 100,000 non-Christians in some ten years of tireless effort. But this success was due not so much to his eloquence as to his sanctity in following in the footsteps of the First Missionary who was sent by the Father to convert a sinful world back to God.

Day 9: The Standards of Christ and Lucifer



(Supplemental Reading for Day 9)

The meditation on the Two Standards synthesizes the goals of the Christian apostolate introduced by [the meditation on] the Call of Christ the King. It also describes the zealous following of Christ in bold realistic terms. Where the Kingdom represents the simple call to follow Jesus in winning souls to also follow Him, the Two Standards point up the existence of another and contrary call from the enemy of Christ, Satan, to follow him. In the Kingdom, the difficulties to be experienced in following the King are either inherent in human nature, or at least not created by opposition from a malicious will. But in the [Two] Standards, the source of the conflict is the hatred of the devil against Christ and His followers.

The Call of Christ the King is to imitate Him "in bearing all insults and reproaches and all poverty"—but without further explanation and motivation. In the Standards, these are supplied, where poverty is shown to be the normal source of reproaches, which are the means to humility, the basis of all other virtues. Moreover, the call to the apostolate is implicit in the Kingdom. It is explicit and of the essence of the Two Standards where Christ, the Lord of the whole world, chooses out so many persons—Apostles and disciples—and sends them throughout the whole world diffusing His sacred doctrine through all states and conditions of men.

The heart of the Two Standards can be expressed in two parallel columns. Each column describes the purpose and the contrary means used by Christ and by Satan. Each has his goal; each is intent on winning followers to his cause; each understands human nature and seeks to draw people to rally under his banner.

	CHRIST	SATAN
Final Goal	To bring human beings to join Him in Heaven	To bring human beings to join him in Hell
Human Agents	Persons who respond generously to Christ's call to follow Him	Persons who are deceived by Satan's call to follow him
Principal Means	Disseminating the sacred doctrine revealed by Christ, Who is Incarnate Truth	Disseminating error as contrived by Satan, the father of lies
Training of the Human	First Step: Love of poverty Second Step: Desire for insults and contempt	First Step: Love of riches Second Step: Desire for wealth and worldly honor
Purpose of the Training	To produce men and women of virtue for the apostolate	To produce men and women steeped in sin, as effective agents of the devil

Main Object to Pray for the Mind	"Knowledge of the true life exemplified in the sovereign and true Commander"	"Knowledge of the deceits of the rebel chief"
Main Object to Pray for the Will	"The grace to imitate Christ the King"	"Help to guard myself against the wiles of the evil spirit"

If these insights into the comparative strategies of Christ and Satan were relevant when Saint Ignatius first proposed them, they are crucially important in our day. Volumes are being written about the mysterious "power" that seems to be de-Christianizing whole nations. The explanation for the phenomenon and its divinely-revealed solution are to be found in the meditation on the Two Standards.

Day 10: Three Classes of People



(Reading for Day 10, Meditation Hour #1)

In relation to the Two Standards, the Three Classes of men bring the battle between Christ and Satan into everyday practical life. What the Two Standards teach objectively about the cosmic struggle of darkness and light, the Three Classes depict psychologically in the mind and will of every human person.

Saint Ignatius describes three classes of people who presumably want to know and do the will of God. But they are laboring under the difficulty of an inordinate affection for some creature, which in itself is not sinful. The three groups have one thing in common: the same sort of creature has the same effect on their wills, an unreasonable attachment to the object possessed. They claim to be willing to be rid of the inordinate affection, but they differ in their readiness to being internally freed from the creaturely attraction.

First class

Members of one class say they want to be liberated from the affection, but they are unwilling to use any effective means. They fail in the fundamental prudence which demands that suitable means be taken to attain a laudable predetermined end. A variety of reasons may account for this inertia. It may be laziness, which avoids the effort necessary to remove the obstacles. It may be avarice, which dreads to make a sacrifice of some long-cherished possession. It may be fear, which shrinks from losing an apparently harmless bodily comfort, or spiritual consolation. It may be want of conviction on the importance of becoming internally detached or a certain impracticality on the method to use. It may finally be a weak faith which distrusts the Providence of God to

supply all the graces necessary to find God Our Lord in peace of mind and heart.

Second class

Members of the second class will compromise. They want to be rid of the interior impediment but also want to hold on to the external possession. They want to shape the course of Providence to suit themselves rather than adapt themselves to the providential will of God. Certainly, all the creatures we possess make us more or less attached to them. The cumulative factors which produce the attachment are numerous and sometimes beyond our power to control, assuming that the creature itself is retained. It may be that something like money, a position or favorite pastime of which I am now enamored, may be kept or continued without giving up the object itself, and yet detachment is achieved. However, if I am sincere in wanting to be freed of a psychological burden, I must be willing to dispose of the physical object, which causes the disorderly interior effect. Otherwise when the time comes – if it comes – to sacrifice what I possess, I will not do so. Why not? Because I am interiorly enslaved by the pleasant person, place or thing to which I am overly attached.

Third class

Members of the third class have the generosity to dispose of the creature outside themselves, if this is necessary, in order to shake off a dangerous affection within themselves. They apply the basic norms of the Principle and Foundation. According to this norm, we measure the use of creatures only by their value as means to attain the purpose of our existence. The third class also apply the rule of the counsels [poverty, chastity, and obedience], which is not satisfied with the minimal service of God, to reach Heaven and avoid hell. According to this rule, we choose what is more

pleasing to God because it makes us more effective channels of His grace to everyone whom His Providence places into our lives.

Day 19: Three Degrees of Humility



(Reading for Day 19, Meditation Hour #1)

The purpose of this meditation is to still better prepare a person for making a good Election.

Compared with the Three Classes (Day 10), the *Degrees* represent three levels of generosity in the following of Christ. Also called the *Modes of Humility*, they are very positive. They test and inspire the will for complete dedication to the service of God.

As conceived by Saint Ignatius, humility is the proper disposition that a human will should assume in relation to the Divine Will. It may reach one of three levels of union with the will of God, in ascending order of sublimity.

The first degree of humility: to avoid mortal sin

The first form of humility means that quality of submission to the Divine Majesty which makes the will ready to sacrifice any created good, even life itself, rather than disobey a Commandment of God binding under mortal sin. In terms of indifference or interior freedom, it requires habitual detachment at least from those creatures which cannot be enjoyed without loss of sanctifying grace.

The second degree of humility: to avoid venial sin

The second level of humility is essentially higher. It presupposes the first but goes beyond it with a readiness to sacrifice anything rather than offend God by venial sin. To practice the second degree, I should be no more "inclined to have riches rather than poverty, to seek honor rather than dishonor, to desire a long life rather than a short life, provided in either alternative I should promote equally the service of God and the salvation of my soul." Saint Ignatius' doctrine here is in full accord with the Church's spiritual teaching. Our fallen human nature requires many practices which are not binding under mortal sin. In fact, we must perform even some actions which are not strictly obligatory if we are to avoid sinning mortally.

The third degree of humility: not only to avoid what is sinful, but to choose what is more pleasing to God, even though no sin is involved

Assuming that a person has attained the first and second levels, there is still one higher degree, which is the most perfect kind of humility.

Editor's note: The following is a transcript from another conference given by Father Hardon, which explains further the third degree of humility.

The *Third Degree of Humility* means choosing what is more pleasing to God. Choosing what is more difficult, more demanding, more self-sacrificing, not because you have to under pain of sin but because you love Jesus Christ and, out of love for Him, you want to be like Him in choosing what He chose. How today's world needs Catholics who are aware of God's great love for them, shedding His Blood on Calvary out of love for us. And therefore, love wants to repay the one it claims to love. If God became man, hear it, a man, in order to show His love for us by dying on Calvary, if we really, really, really love Jesus Christ, we will follow His example and, dare I say it, prefer the cross because the God Who created us out of nothing, became man and chose the Cross out of love for us.

Notice, it is not merely enduring the cross. It is not merely suffering the cross. It is not merely resigning myself to the trials, the sufferings, the pain in my life. No! No! It is loving the cross. And the reason is obvious. In most people's vocabulary, *cross* as a word is a noun. But in God's vocabulary, it is a verb. The cross is the will of God crossing our wills. God is a divine mathematician. How often He will cross our wills, not at 75, or 80, or even 85 degrees, or 89.1 degrees, He will cross our lives. And the more He loves us—I say this from the depths of my heart—the more He loves us, the more He will give us the privilege of crossing our wills at 90 degrees. ...In case you haven't heard, pain is defined as whatever contradicts the human will, but—what an important adversative this is—when you love the one who is sending you the pain, the one who is behind, beneath, around the suffering in your life, once you believe it is the loving God, then—and I believe every syllable of the next sentence—**your-life-is-changed**. There are no more problems in life because then, like the Christ Whom we claim to love, we embrace what we call the cross and thus repay the God Whom we claim to love with the most precious possession in our lives, *our wills*. Let me be as plain as I can: this is how God redeemed the world, by dying on Calvary out of love for us. Sanctity is meaningless unless the virtue that we cultivate is meant as a communicator of grace to others. And the most precious communication of

grace that God can use us to share with others is the love of His Cross. (Father Hardon conference transcript, "Sanctity through the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius," March 16, 1996, Assumption Grotto Catholic Church, Detroit, MI. Copyright © 1996 Inter Mirifica. Used with permission.)

As explained by Saint Ignatius in a little-known directory written by himself, the basic difference between the second and third modes lies in the attitude of the will towards poverty and humiliations. If my will is ready to accept them, but equally ready to avoid them, then I am in the second degree. But if I am not only willing to accept, but actually prefer poverty and humiliations, then I am in the third level of humility.

Concretely, this means that a person is willing to accept the evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity, obedience). Thus a person making the *Spiritual Exercises* is to be encouraged "to desire the counsels rather than (just) the precepts, if this be for the greater service of God" (*Monumenta Historica, "Exercitia Spiritualia,"* pp. 779, 781).

Day 19: The Election



(Reading for Day 19, Meditation Hour #2)

Although the Election is not a distinct meditation, it is the capstone of Ignatian spirituality. It has universal applicability, ranging from an original resolution to embrace a state of life to improving one's conduct in a single area of a state already permanently undertaken. The Election differs, however, from a mere decision. We decide with our minds, but we choose—or elect—with our *wills*. The Election presumes that the mind has already made a decision. Then if the will embraces the decision, it makes the Election.

Moreover, the Election is not only for making the *Spiritual Exercises*. It is meant to include a lifetime of periodic choices that we make to follow Christ more faithfully and thus respond more effectively in cooperating with Him in the extension of His Kingdom.

Every believer in Christ is called to Christian perfection, according to his state in life.

Saint Ignatius distinguishes three occasions which may be repeated when "a sound and good Election can be made." They are called "times" to describe the situation in which a person has certain internal experiences that are suitable for making an important

commitment in the presence of God. All three "times" are part of Ignatian spirituality, but not all three are equally applicable to all persons.

First Time. "When God Our Lord so moves and attracts the will that a devout soul, without hesitation or the possibility of hesitation, follows what has been manifested to it. Saint Paul and Saint Matthew acted thus in following Christ Our Lord" (*Puhl, #175*).

Obviously, an Election rarely occurs under these circumstances. It means that a miraculous grace has been received from God. But it is a grace that should normally not be asked for nor expected from the Lord.

Second Time. "When much light and understanding are derived through the experience of desolation and consolation, and discernment of diverse spirits" (*Puhl, #176*).

This happens more often. In fact, it occurs whenever inspirations and internal movements of the soul are so strong that, with a minimum of intellectual effort, the will is moved to a generous service of God. Sometimes this consolation-desolation experience may be so strong that it practically equates the "First Time." But ordinarily, the will has to exert itself to arrive at a moral decision. The key here is to distinguish the positive sentiments of divine encouragement from the negative impulses aroused by human or diabolical despondency.

Third Time. "This is a time of tranquility. First a man reflects why he is born, namely, to praise God and save his soul. With the desire to attain this end before his mind, he chooses, as a means to the end, a manner or state of life recognized by the Church that will help him in the service of God Our Lord and the salvation of his soul" (*Puhl, #177*).

This is the most ordinary and the most secure time for reaching a decision and acting on the decision to make an Election. Consistent with his practicality, Ignatius gives two methods for making an Election during the "Third Time."

First Method. There are six steps to this method, beginning with mental reflection and ending with prayer for light and strength to make a good Election.

To begin with, I "place before my mind the object about which I want to make a choice."

Then I focus my attention on the end for which I was created along with an activity of will, which is the fruit of previous reflection. I put myself into a state of indifference "like a balance at equilibrium," without deliberately leaning in favor of either side of the choice I am about to make. Then I pray, while weighing the pros and cons, even writing them out in parallel columns. Next, I weigh the reasons on both sides of the prospective decision, favoring the side that has weightier motives based on reason and faith, and not on "any sensual inclination." Once more a recourse to prayer, after which I make a decision, choose what I have decided and trust in Providence that my Election is according to the will of God.

Second Method. This is shorter and approaches the problem from another angle. Before deciding on a given question, I first examine to see if my affection for a person, place or course of action is dictated solely by the will of God. I do not proceed further until I am sure this is the case. Then I place myself

in the position of another person who has my choice to make. What advice would I give that person? I give myself the same.

Or I place myself at the moment of death and consider what choice I would then wish to have made. Make the same choice now.

Or finally, I place myself on Judgment Day, and ask myself what I would then have wished I had chosen. Choose that course of action now.

After reaching a decision, and choosing what I have decided, I offer up my Election to God. I ask Him to confirm it by His grace and trust that He will provide me with the light and strength I need to live up to the choice I have made.

The *Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola* have served many thousands as a guide to living the spiritual life. The vigor of his genius and the clarity of his spiritual teaching have formed a major contribution to the Church and the world.

Copyright © 2003 by Inter Mirifica. Used with permission.

Lord, Teach Us To Pray by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

(Day 15 Supplemental Reading)

Available on the Real Presence website:

http://www.therealpresence.org/essentials/lords_prayer/acc14.htm (and following)

The Most Important Prayer

By every standard of comparison, the most popular prayer in existence is the *Our Father*. One sign of its popularity is the number of polyglot collections of *The Lord's Prayer* which have been published at various times since the invention of printing. Already in 1787 the Spaniard Hervaz printed the *Pater Noster* in three hundred and seven dialects and languages, and the practice of multi-lingual editions has been going on ever since.

But *The Lord's Prayer* is not only the most popular prayer in existence, it is also the most important. According to Saint Augustine, "whatever else we say when we pray, if we pray as we should, we are only saying what is already contained in *The Lord's Prayer*" (Letter 121, 12).

The Recitation of *The Lord's Prayer* has been woven into the fabric of popular devotion since the days of the catacombs. It forms part of the Divine Office and has been so closely associated with the Sacrifice of the Mass that some have mistakenly thought that without the *Pater Noster* there would be no valid consecration of the Holy Eucharist.

One more reflection: If the *Our Father* is so popular and so important, is it also the perfect model of what all our prayers should be? Yes. One Father and Doctor of the Church after another – Saints Cyprian and Augustine, Teresa of Avila and Robert Bellarmine – did not hesitate to say that *The Lord's Prayer* is the divinely revealed pattern of what all Christian prayers should be.

Brevity and Scope

The brevity of the *Our Father* is remarkable, because the number of its petitions could hardly be shorter and yet more exalted. The special merit of this brevity is that it can be easily memorized. Since the early days of the Church, those preparing for Baptism were expected to recite *The Lord's Prayer* by heart.

Moreover, we are thereby reminded that there is no need of much talking when we pray. Why not? Because we are speaking to God Who knows what we need before we ask Him. What is more important is the devotion and fervor of spirit with which we pray.

The masters of the spiritual life found in the *Our Father* a proof of the wisdom of Christ, Who compressed into a few words all the desires and aspirations of the human heart in its intimate communication with God.

Perfection of *The Lord's Prayer*

Among the many saintly commentators on *The Lord's Prayer*, Saint Thomas Aquinas explains why it must be the most perfect prayer that we can say. The *Pater Noster* was taught us by Christ Himself. It was also the only prayer He taught us to say. And He gave it to us in answer to the request of His disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray" (*Luke* 11:1). However, what makes it also commendable is that the structure of the *Our Father* is perfect.

Since prayer is an interpretation of our desires, we should only pray for those things which are proper for us to desire....

Now in *The Lord's Prayer* what we are asking for from God is everything that we may lawfully ambition. It is, therefore, not only a catalogue of petitions but also, and especially, a corrective for our affections....

Thus the first object of our desires is our last end; then the means to arrive at this end. But our end is God, to whom our affections incline in two ways: the one in desiring the glory of God, the other in wishing to enjoy this divine glory. The first belongs to charity by which we love God in Himself; the second to charity by which we love ourselves in God. So, the first petition, "Hallowed be Thy name," asks for the glory of God; and the second, "Thy

Kingdom come,” asks that we may come to the enjoyment of this glory....

Moreover, we are directed to the end of our existence either by something which is essential or by something which is accidental as a means of salvation. But, it can be essential again either directly, according to the merit by which we deserve beatitude because we are obedient to God, and in this sense we ask: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven;” or it may be only instrumental, although essential, because it helps us to merit Heaven. And in this respect we say: “Give us this day our daily bread,” whether we understand this of the sacramental bread of the Eucharist, the daily use of which is profitable to salvation, or of the bread of the body, which is symbolic for a sufficiency of food....

We are also directed to Heaven, accidentally, by the removal of obstacles to beatitude: 1) sin, which directly excludes man from the Kingdom of God. Therefore, we pray “Forgive us our trespasses;” 2) temptation, which leads us into sin. Hence our sixth petition, “Lead us not into temptation;” 3) temporal evils, the consequence of sin, which make the burden of life too heavy. Consequently, our final petition, “Deliver us from evil” (*Summa Theologica*, II, II, 83).

Centuries before Saint Thomas Aquinas and ever since, theologians and mystics, exegetes and moralists have written extensively and in depth, explaining the seven petitions of *The Lord’s Prayer* and applying its lessons to our daily lives.

Words of the *Our Father*

There are two versions of the *Our Father* in the Gospels. The longer version is in Saint Matthew’s Gospel, where it forms part of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. The Lord is explaining how we should pray, and warns His disciples not to multiply words, as the Gentiles do. They think that by talking a great deal, they will be heard. Christians are not to pray in this way. Why not? Because God already knows what we need before we ask Him. “In this manner therefore shall you pray:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation.

But deliver us from evil. Amen” (*Matthew* 6:9-15).

The foregoing is the text in the Latin Vulgate of the New Testament.

Already in apostolic times, the *Pater Noster* was part of the Eucharistic Liturgy, where it was followed by the words, “For thine is the power and the glory, for evermore.” This ending occurs in the first-century liturgical manual, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (8:2). It was taken over by the Eastern Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom and may be found in some Gospel manuscripts. Since the Second Vatican Council, the liturgical addition called the embolism is part of the Eucharistic Prayer in the Latin Rite.

In Saint Luke’s Gospel, *The Lord’s Prayer* occurs as part of the narrative in which the disciples find Jesus praying in a certain place. After He has finished praying, one of the disciples asks Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples.” He told them, “When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation” (*Luke* 11:2-4).

The Church has adopted Saint Matthew’s text for the Liturgy and for its daily use by the faithful.

The Invocation: “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven”

We open *The Lord’s Prayer* by addressing God as Father. The *Pater Noster* is addressed to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But we speak to Him as Father because God is our Father by every possible title.

- He is our Father because He is our Creator, Who brought us into existence out of nothing.
- He is our Father because He is our Redeemer and therefore the source of our supernatural life.
- He is our Father because we are His children by adoption, sharing already on earth in His own divine life by the grace He has given us.
- He is our Father because by His Providence He cares for us and provides us with everything we need.

- He is our Father because He has prepared for us a share in the inheritance that awaits us if we are faithful to the inspirations of His grace.

Christ made sure that from the opening invocation to the closing petition, we realized our solidarity with others. The collective words “we,” “our,” and “us” occur nine times in *The Lord’s Prayer*. This emphasizes the fact that the followers of Christ form a spiritual family, that we are members of the human race, and that when we pray we should recognize our kinship with others and other people’s need of our prayerful help.

Whenever Christ spoke to His heavenly Father, He always said “My Father.” There is only one natural Father of the Second Person of the Trinity. To bring this truth home, Christ also had no natural father of His human nature. But when Jesus taught us to pray, he told *us* to address God as *our* Father.

Saying to God, “Who art in Heaven,” does not mean that somehow He is not on earth. But He is in Heaven as the Destiny to which He is calling us and for which we were made.

In a mysterious sense, Heaven is wherever the experience of God’s presence is enjoyed. On earth we have a foretaste of Heaven in the joy that God gives to those who serve Him, even while they carry their daily cross. In eternity this joy will be unalloyed and without sorrow or any trial.

The visible “heavens” of sky and sun, moon and stars are the biblical symbol for “Heaven” as the home where God dwells and where Christ is preparing a place for us. The opening words of *The Lord’s Prayer* are, therefore, a reminder to raise our minds and hearts from the things below to those which are above. Everything on earth should be seen as a means to the end, or goal, which is our heavenly reward.

First Petition: “Hallowed Be Thy Name”

The Latin words of the first petition bring out clearly what we are here asking for: “*Sanctificetur Nomen tuum.*”

What we are asking is that the Name of God may be sanctified. This calls for some explanations. We are not asking that God might become more holy. That would be blasphemy. He is the All-Holy One because He is the Totally Other. He alone is the Necessary One, the Infinite One; there is no other God than He.

Our petition is rather that God might be recognized and served as God by us and in us. He is all powerful, all wise, and all good. He is the Creator and the Destiny of the human race. But not everyone either acknowledges Him for who He is, or serves Him as He deserves.

Yet that is the main reason why God created rational human beings. He wants them to know Him—love and serve Him in time—as the condition for possessing Him in eternity.

In biblical language, “name” means the being who is named. When we pray that the Name of God may be sanctified, we are asking that He may be glorified by His human creatures because they are His children and He is their God.

In the Church’s understanding, the comparison which occurs in the third petition, “on earth as it is in Heaven,” refers to all the first three petitions. Consequently, in asking that the Name of God be hallowed—that God may be known and loved—we are really praying that His name may be as hallowed on earth as it is in Heaven.

If we ask, how is God’s name hallowed in Heaven? The answer is clear. He is hallowed in Heaven perfectly. The angels and saints in Heaven know Him to perfection and they love Him to the limit of their created power.

Our petition, then, is that we on earth might grow in our knowledge and love of God. Every day, and in fact, every moment, our loving knowledge or intelligent love of Him should become more and more like the beatific vision of the hosts of Heaven.

One more observation. The more we sanctify the Name of God, by our devoted service, the more He will sanctify us. Indeed, we may say that our sanctity depends on how devotedly we hallow the Name of God.

Second Petition: “Thy Kingdom Come”

The Kingdom for which we are praying to come is the Kingdom of which Christ so constantly spoke in the Gospels. The Greek word *Basileia* (kingdom), which occurs in *The Lord’s Prayer* is the same term He used throughout His public ministry and, after the Resurrection, up to the time of His Ascension into Heaven. Jesus intended us to pray that the Kingdom He described, in every sense, might come.

There are two principal ways in which Jesus spoke of the Kingdom. He described it as a *present reality*, and as a *future anticipation*.

Present Reality

The Kingdom as a present reality is the Church which Christ was founding. It is a visible reality to which people are called by the preaching of the Gospel; into which they enter through Baptism; in which they are sanctified by the Sacraments; which is composed of both good and bad members; with which Christ identifies Himself as “my Kingdom;” and from which the whole world receives the graces of salvation.

On all these levels, the Kingdom as present reality is meant to “come,” that is, to increase and intensify.

- We pray that the Church may become more effective in proclaiming the Gospel; that the zeal of her members might increase by spending themselves in preaching Christ and Him crucified.
- We pray that more people may receive the gift of the true faith and be baptized.
- We pray that those who are in the Church may become more holy and pleasing to God.
- We pray that those in the Church who are estranged from God through sin may repent and be reconciled with the Lord.
- We pray that Christians may become more Christlike so that others may see their good works and be drawn to embrace the faith that produces such reflections of the Divine Master.
- We pray that by their practice of virtue, all followers may become more effective channels of grace to everyone whose life they touch.

Future Anticipation

Especially in the *Gospel of Matthew*, Jesus speaks frequently of the “Kingdom of Heaven.”

Here the petition of *The Lord’s Prayer* is a plea for the salvation of souls and for their glorification in the world to come.

- We pray for the grace that people need to reach the heavenly Kingdom for which they were made.
- We pray for the light that people need to know God’s will in their lives and the strength to fulfill this will, so they may deserve to enter Heaven.

- We pray that those who belong to Christ’s Kingdom on earth may be more generous in cooperating with His grace, so that in Heaven they may give God greater glory for all eternity.

Third Petition: “Thy Will Be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven”

This petition is an epitome of Christianity and a synthesis of our whole purpose for existence.

Why do we have a free will? In order to do the will of God. Unlike the irrational creation that surrounds us, we can choose either to conform our wills to God or refuse to do so.

The scope of this petition is the prayer that human beings on earth might do God’s will as the angels and saints are doing in Heaven. We therefore ask that everyone on earth may do God’s will, even as everyone in Heaven does. There are no exceptions in Heaven. We pray that there will be fewer and fewer exceptions in doing God’s will on earth.

We further ask that, as in Heaven, people may do God’s will out of love and not through fear. In Heaven there is no danger of not doing God’s will, and therefore no fear of the consequences.

We further pray that we on earth, like those in Heaven, may do God’s will spontaneously. We ask that the Divine Will be done without hesitation, with no aversion or reluctance. On earth we know how slow we can be in responding to the known will of God. Our plea is to become more ready to fulfill the will of God the moment we know what He wants.

We also pray to do God’s will with selfless generosity. There is no envy in Heaven among the elect, because they see others also doing God’s will. There is no jealousy but perfect cooperation in performing the Divine Will, not only individually but collectively.

We finally pray that, as in Heaven, those on earth may enjoy doing the will of God. There is a mysterious relationship between our doing what pleases God, and God’s doing what pleases us. In Heaven everyone does only what pleases God. He, in turn, does everything to please the elect. They are supremely happy. Why? Because they are perfectly conformed to the will of the Most High. We pray to discover, already on earth, a foretaste of the joys of Heaven, reserved for those who do the Divine Will. In fact, the measure of true

happiness this side of Heaven is the degree of our fidelity in doing the Divine Will.

Fourth Petition: “Give us This Day our Daily Bread”

This is the turning point in the *Our Father*. Where the first three petitions were directed to the glory of God, from now on they are concerned with our needs.

The Church’s tradition finds two levels of request for nourishment in this petition. We ask for the *food we need for our souls*, and the *sustenance we need for our bodies*.

Spiritual Nourishment

When Saint Pius X issued his decree on frequent Holy Communion, he explained that *frequent* means *daily* reception of the Blessed Sacrament. He based his teaching on the comparison with the food that we daily need to sustain our bodies, and the “all but unanimous interpretation” of the Fathers of the Church. They say that “daily bread” in *The Lord’s Prayer* means daily Communion. The Pope concludes that “the Eucharistic Bread should be our daily food.”

It is assumed that, in receiving Holy Communion, a person has sanctifying grace. The reason is obvious. No less than food for the body presumes that the body has its natural life, so the Eucharistic food for the soul presumes that the soul is supernaturally alive.

There is also another spiritual food that we pray for in this petition. That is the nourishment of truth that the human mind needs for its daily sustenance. No less than the body needs material food to remain healthy and stay alive, so the soul has to be fed daily on God’s revealed word to maintain its spiritual vigor and life.

Christ’s long discourse on the promise of the Eucharist uses the same word “Bread” to refer to both kinds of spiritual nourishment: His own living Body in the Holy Eucharist, and His revealed Word in the truths of salvation.

Daily Needs of the Body

On the material side of our bodily needs, the fourth petition asks God to provide the hungry with food, the homeless with shelter, the sick and the aged with adequate care, the victims of addiction to drugs and alcohol with help to recover from indulgence and the resulting disease.

This petition applies to both impoverished and affluent societies, which often co-exist in the same country and even the same city or locality.

It is no exaggeration to say that in praying “Give us this day our daily bread” we are literally begging the Lord to move the hearts of men to share with one another of the resources that He makes available for respectable human living.

It is a sad irony of the modern world in an age of unprecedented wealth, the world is going through a period of superhuman suffering. There are many reasons for this paradox. But one of them is the cold indifference to the bodily sufferings of countless millions in every region of the globe.

When Pope John Paul II wrote his apostolic exhortation on *The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*, he touched on every aspect of this petition of the *Our Father*.

We are to pray, he said, especially that God in His mercy, will inspire a legion of Good Samaritans to see the physical needs of other people and come to their selfless aid.

Following the parable of the Gospel, we could say that suffering, which is present under so many different forms in our human world, is also present in order to unleash love in the human person, that unselfish gift of one’s “I” on behalf of other people, especially those who suffer....

The world of human suffering calls for, so to speak, another world: the world of human love; and in a certain sense owes to suffering that unselfish love which stirs in one’s heart and actions. The person who is a “neighbor” cannot indifferently pass by the suffering of another....

He must “stop,” “sympathize” just like the Samaritan in the Gospel parable. The parable in itself expresses a deeply Christian truth, but one that at the same time is very universally human. It is not without reason that, also in ordinary speech any activity on behalf of the suffering and needy is called “Good Samaritan” work (*Salvifici doloris*, VII, 29).

Whatever else we pray for, when we ask for our daily bread, we are asking the God of mercy to inspire

countless Good Samaritans to reflect this mercy in their loving concern for the suffering of others.

Fifth Petition: “Forgive Us Our Trespasses as We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us”

This is no ordinary petition to God asking for His mercy. We not only ask Him to be merciful to us, but we dare place a condition and a norm on God’s forgiveness. What is this condition and norm? It is the practice and the measure of our forgiveness to others.

What are we being told? We are being told that unless we are merciful to others, God will not be merciful to us. We further believe that the measure of our forbearance with the sins of others mysteriously determines the degree of God’s patient forgiveness of us.

Every form of mercy that we so deeply desire from God toward ourselves, we pray that we might receive from Him. But the condition remains. God will infallibly be tolerant and patient, indulgent and lenient, tender and compassionate, pardoning and forgiving toward us sinners if we practice these qualities of mercy toward those whom God’s Providence puts into our lives.

Saint Matthew speaks of “debts” and “debtors,” Saint Luke of “sins” and being “indebted.” But the meaning in each case is clear. By offending God in sin, we incur a debt of love and punishment for our misdeeds. We owe God greater love than we would have had we not sinned, and we owe Him a debt of suffering as punishment for offending the Divine Majesty.

In His mercy, God provides us with countless opportunities for expiation by allowing others to sin against us. Our patience in enduring their offenses, our kindness in bearing their coldness, our responding with love for them in return for their lovelessness toward us is part of God’s providential plan of redeeming a sinful world.

We pray for the strength to forgive so that we might be forgiven in return.

There is also a marvelous communication of grace at stake here. Not infrequently, the very reason God places difficult people into our lives is that by our loving patience with them, we might obtain from God the graces of conversion they need. We are channels of grace to others. This means that to be an effective channel for some people, I may have to be the victim

of their indifference, or even cruelty, to win for them the gift of repentance to be reconciled with an offended God.

Sixth Petition: “Lead us Not into Temptation”

Temptation is an invitation to sin. The source of the temptation may be the attractive, sinful conduct of other people, called the *world*; or the disorderly desires of our own fallen nature called *concupiscence*; or the malicious urging of the evil spirit, whom we call the *devil*.

When we pray not to be led into temptation, we are not asking to be freed from the testing of all human beings to prove their loyalty to God. Temptation as a test of our fidelity to Him is part of our probation here on earth, and the price of earning our reward in the world to come.

What we are praying for is not to allow ourselves to give in to temptation, but rather to profit from the temptation experience. The saintly interpreters of *The Lord’s Prayer* give no less than nine ways that we should protect ourselves from yielding to temptation and should profit from the inevitable temptations in our lives. Our prayer in this petition will be answered to the extent that we follow these rules of Christian wisdom:

1. Be on guard against the evil spirit. Know his strategy, be able to recognize his deceits and above all, “resist him, steadfast in the faith” (1 *Peter* 5:9).
2. Daily examine your conscience to see how well you coped with the temptations of each day. Thank God for the grace of benefiting from the temptations you overcame and ask His forgiveness for those to which you gave in.
3. Periodically during the day, look into the “book of your soul.” Read there what thoughts are on your mind, what desires in your will. Sift these interior movements by discarding some, keeping others, and acting on those which your conscience tells you are graces from God.
4. Be suspicious of your natural tendency to go after whatever appeals to you. Avoid being impulsive in rejecting what you dislike, or embracing what you like. All temptations are

attractive. Learn to practice discernment of spirits as explained by the masters of the spiritual life.

5. Remember that we are now living by faith, which means that of ourselves we may not even recognize a temptation. Thus we must constantly ask for light from God: “Lord, that I may see.”
6. Life on earth is a warfare and we are members of the Church Militant. We must, therefore, be properly armed with humility and prudence, and the graces that come for the asking. Christ’s admonition to the disciples in Gethsemane is addressed to all of us, “Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation” (*Matthew 26:41*).
7. Be on the alert. We can get into habits of action that may dull our perception. Custom can blind us to danger and keep us from even knowing we are being tempted. We may give in before we even realize what has happened.
8. Set yourself models for imitation. Do not follow the crowd. Come to know certain persons whose conduct you admire and whose example you resolve to follow. It may be several people. In one you imitate the person’s humility, in another fidelity to prayer, in another selfless charity, in another uncomplaining patience, in another cheerfulness under trial, in another prudent planning of work, in another devotion to the Eucharist, in another a great love of Mary, and in another a strong zeal for souls. In this way, we have a ready substitute for the temptations from the world – the attractive sinful behavior of others. We have, instead, the inspiration of good people in the world – their attractive practice of virtue.
9. Do not live in false security. Cultivate a healthy fear of offending a loving God. This will give you the protection you need to remain faithful to Him no matter how seductive the temptations you encounter.

Seventh Petition: “Deliver Us From Evil. Amen.”

The closing petition of *The Lord’s Prayer* is a compendium of everything from which we want God to deliver us, in this life and in the life to come.

Saint Cyprian, who wrote the first extensive commentary on the *Pater Noster*, teaches that we are here praying to be freed from the consequences of sin. The Church follows this teaching, which places our dread of evil into proper perspective.

So far in the *Our Father*, we have prayed for God’s mercy on our sins, for strength to do God’s will, for wisdom not to give in to temptations. In closing, we ask to be spared such evils as are the result of sin, our own and the sins of others.

Evil, in general, is anything contrary to the will. But there are two kinds of evil, even as there are, finally, two wills that can be displeased: that which is contrary to God’s will we call sin; that which is contrary to the human will we call pain.

The special focus of the last petition of *The Lord’s Prayer* is to be delivered from pain. But, immediately we must be careful to explain what this means. While ultimately all pain is somehow the result of sin, not all pain is bad for us. Indeed, some pain is even necessary for the salvation and sanctification of the world.

When God became man, He had joy set before Him and chose the Cross. If we are to become like Him and cooperate with Him in the redemption of the world, we should expect and even embrace a certain amount of pain in our lives.

Yet, in the final petition of His own prayer, Christ tells us to ask for deliverance from evil. [From] what kind of evil, as pain, are we praying to be spared? Pain is whatever contradicts our wills. It can be pain in the body, or pain in the soul. It can be physical distress or emotional disturbance, or spiritual dryness, or mental anxiety. In a word, the pain can be anything, inside of us or outside of us, that we find displeasing and want to be freed from enduring.

Realizing that pain can be a great blessing, we pray to be delivered from such pain as God, in His wisdom knows would not be beneficial for our souls. We also pray to profit from the pain we have to suffer. We pray that the pain we endure will benefit others. And we pray for deliverance from that absolute evil which is the eternal loss of God.

“**Amen**” is considered part of the biblical text of *The Lord’s Prayer*. It is in the Latin Vulgate of the New

Testament and has been extensively commented on by the saints.

Literally, “Amen” means “truly,” or “it is true,” and expresses acceptance of what has just been said. At the end of the *Our Father* it is an earnest hope that God will grant all our preceding petitions. It is an act of confidence that the Father is moved by this “Amen,” which Jesus so often used to stress the divine authority of His words.

Copyright © 2002 Inter Mirifica.
Pocket Catholic Catechism
Used with permission.

The Our Father by Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

Founder of the Marian Catechist Apostolate

(Day 15 Supplemental Reading)

Available on The Real Presence website under above title
http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Prayer/Prayer_063.htm

When the Apostles asked our Lord to teach them how to pray, He gave them what has since come to be known as *The Lord's Prayer*. In teaching them, Christ was teaching us, and He taught us many things. My plan is not to give a commentary on the seven petitions of *The Lord's Prayer*, but rather to reflect in God's presence on the lessons that this prayer should teach us.

I choose the following lessons:

- prayer must be taught;
- we should have sacred time for prayer;
- there ought to be togetherness in prayer;
- the God to whom we pray is our Father;
- we ought to have priorities in our prayer;
- when we pray vocally we should understand what we are saying;
- and finally, we should live as we pray.

Teach Others How to Pray

When Christ was asked: "Lord, teach us to pray," this request was the declaration of a profound truth, namely, that prayer must be taught. This means that, in God's ordinary Providence, we do not precisely know how to pray. We do not know how to pray naturally or spontaneously. We do not know how to pray, I shall not say at all, but, well, just naturally. We need grace to know how to pray. We need to pray for the grace to know how to pray.

God must be and continually remain our supernatural Teacher of prayer so that what the Apostles addressed to the Savior as recorded in the Gospels we should often request of Him: "Lord, teach me, teach me how to pray." Teach me when to pray. Teach me why I should pray. Teach me who I am to pray to. Teach me what I am to pray for. Otherwise, quite frankly, we can waste a lot of useful energy unless we pray as we should.

There is such a thing as praying at all and praying well. To pray well we need grace from God; but we also need help from others. We do not know how to pray,

well, spontaneously. We need someone to help us. Of all the things that one human being can teach another, there is no science more important than this one. The most needed pedagogy in the world is the pedagogy of prayer. And yet I think none is more taken for granted or neglected. When the Son of God came down to earth He inspired His disciples to ask Him to teach them. On one single occasion they asked Him, "teach us to pray." We assume that people just naturally pray. There is nothing more basic for parents to teach their children; for priests, the faithful; for teachers, their students; and for counselors, the most valuable guidance we can give to anyone is to lead them and teach them how to pray.

Create a Sacred Time for Prayer

Christ's response to being asked: "Lord, teach us to pray" was "When you pray, say..." And He proceeded to give them—that is, us—the *Pater Noster*. That adverb "when" is precious. It is also very revealing. What was Christ saying? He was, in effect, saying that there are two kinds of time in our lives. There is what may be called *profane time* when our main preoccupation is necessarily with creatures; call it secular time. Then there is what may be called *sacred time* when our main preoccupation is with the Creator.

We cannot physically or psychologically always be preoccupied directly and exclusively with God. That is what Heaven is for. There will be no more profane time in Heaven. Wonderful! But I do not think that is most people's problem. For most people, they are so preoccupied with creatures that they have little or no sacred time in their lives. They have little or no time for God. Hence the importance of Christ's injunction: "When you pray..." Yes, but that "when" does not just happen; we must make it happen. We must create these "whens" in our lives. No one else, not even God, will do it for us.

When we take time out for God, what bursting creaturely generosity, how nice of us, how thoughtful to take some time out—out of what?—for God. When

we interrupt our secular pursuits to think of God. When we turn—and it's a turning—there need be no muscular movement, no locomotion through space, but no turning is more active than when we consciously, deliberately and I recommend even bodily, turn. It is a turning alright, from earth to Heaven, from time to eternity, and what we embarrassingly must admit, from ourselves to God. But we must want to do it. Those who want those “whens” have them, those who do not, do not. “When you pray, say....”

Create Togetherness in Prayer

Our Lord made sure that *The Lord's Prayer* was cast in the first person plural . . . Clearly, Christ wanted to emphasize the importance of prayer together with others. And no less than creating sacred time, which only we can do, so here too there is an element of consciousness and deliberateness about doing anything with others, including prayer. This can be any one of many forms of togetherness. It can be a togetherness of words when we and others say the same physical prayer. It can be a togetherness of time when we pray together because we pray at the same time (and the sacrifice required in adjusting myself to others and they to me is part of the art of communitarian prayer). Togetherness of place—we pray in the same room, chapel or church. Togetherness of purpose—when we pray with the same desires and we know beforehand that we are thus praying for the same intention. Togetherness of faith—we all profess because we share the same belief. Togetherness of vocation—when we speak as persons who are at the same time a new moral person called by God to the same vocation. Togetherness of zeal—when what we pray for and how we pray reflects the fact that we are striving after the same goal in the apostolate and realize how God blesses this togetherness of a zealous community.

God as Our Father

When Christ taught us to say *The Lord's Prayer*, He carefully prefixed the word “Our” because when He spoke of His own natural Father, He always said, “My Father.” The disciples did not ask Him: “Lord, tell us how you pray.” No, “teach us to pray.” So “when you pray,” He said, “say ‘our Father.’”

The Father, therefore, of the *Our Father* is the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is not only and cannot be only the first Person. It is God and God is Triune. But, then, we ask: Why address God as Father? For the best of reasons: because that is what He is. We

are just calling Him by His right name. You see, God is Father in two very different senses as found in the Gospels. He is Father when Christ speaks of His Father, when it is the first Person of the Blessed Trinity; and He is Father in relationship to all creatures, but most especially to the human family. He is then our Father because He made the human race. That is why we are a family! A family has the same parents, except in this case—the same Parent. Remember, when we pray we are speaking to God as members of the same human progeny with a common ancestor who is God.

He is again our Father because He elevated us to membership by grace in His own Trinitarian Family. There is one created family; there is one uncreated “Family.” The uncreated “Family”—we have put the word family in quotation marks—is the Holy Trinity. We have become members by grace of what the three Persons are members by their divine nature.

He is our Father because He cares for us in the two profound senses in which any loving father cares. He cares because *He loves*, and He cares because *He provides*. And He provides because He loves. And He would not really be loving unless He also provided.

He is our Father because He has made us heirs of Heaven to which only the Trinity has a right. We have no claim on entering the household of God. We have become, thanks to the Incarnation, co-heirs with Christ. He is the natural Son; we are the adopted children. But that destiny is still waiting for us. In other words, He not only is our Father now – He will remain our Father for all eternity because then we shall enjoy, with Him and as far as it is possible for creatures, like Him, the beatitude which only the Divine Family of the Triune God has a right to experience.

Priorities in Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is a series of seven petitions. But they are not casually put together—fancy Christ doing anything casually. They represent three kinds of priorities:

- the priority of grace over nature;
- the priority of God's cause over our needs;
- the priority of the positive over the negative.

What is the priority of grace over nature? At most, two of the seven petitions have to do with temporal, or as we might say, natural blessings: “Give us this day our daily bread,” sounds kind of natural, sort of earthy, and “deliver us from evil” – we can think of all kinds of temporal and nature evils. Even these two have primarily a spiritual meaning. But all the others, including these two, are Christ’s way of telling us that *the main object of our asking should be things of the spirit*. First the order of grace and only secondly, or secondarily, things natural or temporal or a nice day tomorrow or relief from whatever pain I may be experiencing—as though pain could not be a grace. So who wants to get rid of a grace? That is the first priority.

The second priority is God’s cause over our needs. If we look carefully over the seven petitions we find the first three refer directly to God and only then do we come down to our own needs. We are up in Heaven – “hallowed be Thy name.” Then “Give us this day our daily bread.” It is Christ’s own expression of His injunction to seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice. How we need to learn this, and what a long lifetime it takes, I do not say to master it, but even to suspect that it might be so. Provided we *look to God’s interests first*, He will always take care of ours. How easy to use those words, how hard to live up to them! If I look to God, God will look after me.

Then the priority of the positive over the negative. The first four petitions are positive. Only the last three are negative and Christ conveniently tucked them underneath. “Forgive Us”—we need remission of our sins. “Lead us not into temptation,” “deliver us from evil.” There are many object lessons, but at least this one can be mentioned—to *stress the positive in prayer*. We are all the same, we are equally human. We dread this and we fear that. You cannot imagine the number of things we are praying—how shall I put it—from! “O Lord, deliver me.” Without excluding that, yet our primary focus in prayer should be praying for, though perforce we are perhaps most conscious of our need of prayer when we are in trouble.

In Vocal Prayer Know What You are Saying

Much of our prayer experience is vocal prayer. Vocal prayer properly explained is vocal twice over. It is, first of all, specified words that are to be said; they are not the spontaneous expressions of the heart. That is vocal prayer. Then, although vocal prayer could be said in silence, it is also and quite frequently (and when it is communal, always) said out loud.

The built-in problem with vocal prayer is routine. The trouble with vocal prayer is that, it may be vocal all right, but it may not be prayer, or can be so mechanical that the lips are used but the heart can be who knows where. Hence, the value of knowing what we are saying when we pray vocally. This I consider *the single gravest responsibility we have regarding vocal prayer—to know what we are saying*. This makes our prayer more what it should be—mental—than merely vocal.

This in turn implies that we periodically meditate on the vocal prayers we recite. There are various methods recommended by the spiritual masters. The essential thing is to take each part of the prayer for separate reflection. So what is wrong with spending an hour on the first two words, “Our Father”? Then beg God, even as we reflect, to enlighten our minds on the meaning of what we are saying, so that while reflecting we are also asking God, “Lord, what does this mean?” Try to see the prayer as a whole. See how one part is related to another. One of the principal sources of insight, in things of the spirit, to give us a deeper understanding of God’s mysteries, is the light that one mystery sheds on another. Things that you have never perhaps seen before will be seen once you relate, for example, the first petition, “hallowed be Thy name,” with the last one, “deliver us from evil.” You can spend a most interesting three hours in seeing how those two petitions are connected.

It is not, of course, necessary to be actively thinking about the meaning of what we are saying when we are actually praying vocally, but *prior meditation will insure that we bring to our lips also our hearts*. We shall put into what we are physically pronouncing all that we have learned. What I am saying is that our vocal prayers should always be richer and deeper than just the words we use when we speak. We are to bring all the depth of insight, all the inspiration of soul that by the time we recite *The Our Father, The Hail Mary*, whatever vocal prayer we have by now perhaps said many thousands of times, all that past, all that depth, all that intensity comes into the words we use when we pray vocally.

Living as We Pray—Humbly and Putting God First

Although we seldom perhaps advert to it, there ought to be a close relationship between our prayer and our life. This relationship should work both ways, from prayer to our life and from life to our prayer. This means, therefore, that *our prayer should reflect how we are to live*, that we pray for what we need to live as we should, that we pray as God wants us to live.

The Lord's Prayer is the perfect pattern of what our lives should be. They should first of all be lives in which God is first in everything we do, first *in intention*, first *in purpose*, first *in intensity* of effort, first *in the time* we spend, because even when we are doing other things God should not be totally absent from our minds. It is again the perfect pattern of how we should live because if God is our Father we are His children. *The Lord's Prayer* teaches us, how eloquently it instructs us, that we are to be and always remain and never dare to rise above being children with respect to God.

Finally, if there is anything *The Lord's Prayer* teaches us, it is the absolute need for humility. What is *The Lord's Prayer* except the acknowledgment of man's total emptiness before God. It teaches us that if we live as Christ taught us to pray we shall practice other kinds of humilities, but *the one humility that must be thematic in our life is the sense of our nothingness in the presence of God* and therefore that we shall live humility because that is what Christ told us when He taught us *The Lord's Prayer*.

Since the first century of the Christian era *The Lord's Prayer* has been the most important single prayer in the life of the Church. Its importance in God's eyes must be great because although God became man to tell us many things, there is nothing practically more important than His teaching us how to pray. And it is all locked up in the simple formula of *The Lord's Prayer*.

The *Hail Mary* by Saint Louis De Montfort

When we praise and bless Our Lady by saying the Angelic Salutation (*Hail Mary*) she always passes on these praises to Almighty God in the same way as she did when she was praised by Saint Elizabeth. The latter blessed her in her most elevated dignity as Mother of God and Our Lady immediately returned these praises to God by her beautiful *Magnificat*.

Just as the Angelic Salutation gives glory to the Blessed Trinity, it is also the very highest praise that we can give Our Lady.

One day when Saint Mechtilde was praying and was trying to think of some way in which she could express her love of the Blessed Mother better than she had done before, she fell into ecstasy. Our Lady appeared to her with the Angelic Salutation in flaming letters of gold upon her bosom and said to her: “My daughter, I want you to know that no one can please me more than by saying the salutation which the Most Adorable Trinity sent to me and by which He raised me to the dignity of Mother of God.

“By the word *Ave* (which is the name Eve, Eva), I learned that in His infinite power God had preserved me from all sin and its attendant misery which the first woman had been subject to.

“The name *Mary* which means ‘lady of light’ shows that God has filled me with wisdom and light, like a shining star, to light up Heaven and earth.

“The words *full of grace* remind me that the Holy Spirit has showered so many graces upon me and that I am able to give these graces in abundance to those who ask for them through me as Mediatrix.

“When people say *the Lord is with thee* they renew the indescribable joy that was mine when the Eternal Word became incarnate in my womb.

“When you say to me *blessed art thou among women* I praise Almighty God’s divine mercy which lifted me to this exalted plane of happiness.

“And at the words *blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus*, the whole of Heaven rejoices with me to see my Son Jesus Christ adored and glorified for having saved mankind.” (*The Secret of the Rosary*, Bay Shore, NY: Montfort Publications, 1999, pp. 44-45)

Mary’s Unfailing Assistance

In 1521, when Saint Ignatius was recovering from his injuries, Our Lady appeared to him surrounded by light and holding the Child Jesus. She appeared to him throughout his conversion and the founding of the Society of Jesus. Mary’s unfolding assistance in his conversion, prepared him to discern the course his life was to take. Is this not also the model for the formation of the Marian Catechist? As we grow in our spiritual practice of praying the daily Holy Rosary, we are invited more deeply into the friendship of our Blessed Mother, who then prepares us to enter into the *Ignatian Spiritual Exercises* just as Saint Ignatius did in the 16th century. From these *Exercises*, we discover the path to prayerfully discern the ways Our Lord will guide us to be generous, faithful Marian Catechists.

The daily Rosary is a particular time to seek out the intercession of Our Lady for the fruitfulness of the retreat. She will guide and assist you to follow where the Lord is leading and she will procure the necessary graces.

Prayers Before Spiritual Direction Guide

Please pray the following prayers for your Spiritual Director before receiving spiritual direction, and periodically during the retreat as well. Remember to ask your Spiritual Director for a blessing at the conclusion of each one-hour session of spiritual direction.

Prayer Before Spiritual Direction

Jesus, I am about to confer with the counselor Your Providence has chosen for the guidance of my soul. Help me to speak frankly and confidently to him, and to hear his counsels with humility and docility. May they lead me to a clearer knowledge of myself and a deeper insight and a warmer love of You, a better appreciation of my vocation and the means it offers me to attain the perfection You expect of me. Amen. (*Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book*, p. 273)

Prayer For One's Spiritual Director

Eternal Father, turn Your merciful gaze upon the soul of this priest. Endow him with the strength of Your blessing. For the love of the Heart of Your Son in which he is enfolded, impart to him Your power and light, that he may be able to guide me in the way of salvation. (Adapted from *Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book*, p. 299)

Come Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created

R. and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

LET US PRAY. O God, Who didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ Our Lord, Amen. (*Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book*, p. 406)

Prayer for Priests—Saint Faustina's Diary

O my Jesus, I beg You on behalf of the whole Church, grant it love and the light of Your Spirit and give power to the words of priests so that hardened hearts might be brought to repentance and return to You, O Lord.

Lord, give us holy priests. You Yourself maintain them in holiness. O Divine and Great High Priest, may the power of Your mercy accompany them everywhere and protect them from the devil's traps and snares which are continually being set for the souls of priests.

May the power of Your mercy, O Lord, shatter and bring to naught all that might tarnish the sanctity of priests, for you can do all things (1052). And I ask You for a special blessing and for light, O Jesus, for the priests before whom I will make my confessions throughout my lifetime [and especially for those priests currently providing spiritual direction to Marian Catechists] (240).



Prayer for Priests

O Almighty, Eternal God, look upon the Face of Your Son and for love of Him, Who is the Eternal High Priest, have pity on Your priests.

Remember, O most compassionate God, that they are but weak and frail human beings. Stir up in them the grace of their vocation which is in them by the imposition of the bishop's hands. Keep them close to You, lest the enemy prevail against them, so that they may never do anything in the slightest degree unworthy of their sublime vocation.

O Jesus, I pray
for Your faithful and fervent priests;
for Your unfaithful and tepid priests;
for Your priests laboring at home or
abroad in distant mission fields;
for Your tempted priests;
for the lonely and desolate priests;
for Your young priests;

for Your dying priests;
for the souls of Your priests in
purgatory.

But above all, I commend to You the priests dearest to me, the priest who baptized me, the priests who have absolved me from my sins, the priests at whose Masses I have assisted and who have offered me Your Body and Blood in Holy Communion, the priests who have taught and instructed me or helped and encouraged me, and the priests to whom I am indebted in any other way, [and especially this priest from whom I seek spiritual direction].

O Jesus, keep them all close to Your Heart, and bless them abundantly in time and in eternity. Amen. —Cardinal Cushing. (*Chalice of Strength, Prayers for Priests*, Detroit: Opus Sanctorum Angelorum Crusade for Priests, 1996, p. 14)



Recommendations for those completing the Exercises by Father John Morris, S.J.

Father John Morris, S.J., writing in the late 1800's, gives timeless advice for those finishing a 30-day Ignatian retreat. The following are his recommendations:

1. He who goes from a warm place to a cold or damp one is, if he is not careful, readily affected by the change of air. So he who passes from a retreat to ordinary life is in danger of losing in a short time the lights and fervor of the *Exercises*. For the impressions of grace not yet being strengthened by habit, it is almost certain, unless great precaution be used, that they will soon be weakened, and finally dissipated altogether.

2. In coming out of the *Exercises*, do not fail to thank Our Lord for the graces of the retreat. Recall in His presence all the lights, all the inspirations you have received, and look on them as so many testimonies of the special love of Our Lord for you. Renew your resolution to adopt all the necessary means to accomplish what you know of His Divine Will towards you. Fear lest so great a grace, if it does not make you better, should make you more guilty, and serve to draw down on you a more severe condemnation at the tribunal of God.

3. Be careful on re-entering the world to be on your guard against *sin* and the *occasions of sin*. On the one hand, you must expect that the spirit of darkness will neglect nothing to draw you away; on the other, you must not conceal from yourself that you have everything to fear from your own weakness: for you have in the depths of your heart inclinations like a tree that has been cut, but whose roots still live; or like a torch just extinguished, but which lights again as soon as it is brought near the flame. You require, then, both a spirit of fear lest you allow yourself to be deceived by the demon and

by your own heart, and at the same time great courage to combat both.

4. If after the retreat you fall even into some serious fault, do not think that the fruit of the *Exercises* is lost, and so give way to discouragement. It is the ordinary artifice of the evil one to draw the soul again into its old faults, and from these faults into dejection and despair; he thus endeavors to make perseverance appear impossible; and finally, to withdraw the soul forever from the service of God. After each fault, humble yourself before the Lord, repair as soon as possible to the Sacraments, have full confidence in the Divine mercy, and begin again with new ardor to walk in the path of virtue.

5. The following are the most efficacious means of preserving the fruits of the retreat:

- 1) Devote each day half-an-hour, or if possible an hour, to meditation, and a quarter of an hour to a Particular and General Examen according to the method traced in the *Exercises*.
- 2) Approach the Sacrament of Penance weekly and receive Holy Communion more often than just on Sunday.
- 3) Fix a rule for your daily actions, keep to it carefully, and in each action study as much as possible to sanctify it by purity of intention, which consists in proposing to ourselves no other motive but the glory and good pleasure of God.
- 4) Choose an enlightened confessor, who will be a guide to you in ways of virtue, and with whom you may speak of all that concerns your soul.
- 5) Often read pious books, frequent the company of good men, and carefully avoid the conversation of the wicked.
- 6) Apply yourself with perseverance to the acquirement of some solid virtue, above all, of humility and charity.
- 7) Place yourself under the protection of Mary, have a tender piety to this good Mother, and never allow a day to pass without offering her some homage.
- 8) Finally, every year devote a week, if possible, to a spiritual retreat; and if this be impossible, at least at Easter make a review or General Confession of all the faults of the past year.¹²

¹² *Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, John Morris, S.J., (London: Burns & Gates, 1880) pp. 78-79.

MORNING OFFERING

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer You my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart, the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, the reunion of all Christians. I offer them for the intentions of our Bishops, all members of the Apostleship of Prayer and, in particular, for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.

MEMORARE

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly onto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

ACT OF FAITH

O my God, I firmly believe that You are one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; I believe that Your Divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths that the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

ACT OF HOPE

O my God, relying on Your almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon for my sins, the help of Your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.

ACT OF CHARITY

O my God, I love You above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because You are all-good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me and ask pardon of all whom I have injured.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

My Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love Thee above all things, and I desire to receive Thee into my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace Thee as if Thou wert already come, and unite myself wholly to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee. Amen

—Saint Alphonsus de Liguori

FOR GENEROSITY

Dear Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve You as You deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek rest; to labor and not to seek reward, save that of knowing that I do Your will. Amen.

—Saint Ignatius Loyola

SAINT JOSEPH

Saint Joseph, foster-father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and true spouse of Mary ever Virgin,
Pray for us.

Saint Joseph, model and patron of those who love the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
Pray for us.

SAINT MICHAEL

Saint Michael, the Archangel, defend us in the day of battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil, may God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into Hell Satan and all the other evil spirits who prowl throughout the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.
(*Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book*, p. 415, *Large print*, p. 573)

OUR FATHER

Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL MARY

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of death. Amen.

GLORY BE

GLORY BE to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

SOUL OF CHRIST—

ANIMA CHRISTI

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from the side of Christ, wash me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me.

Within Your wounds hide me.

Let me never be separated from You,

From the wicked foe, defend me.

At the hour of my death, call me

And bid me come to you,

That with Your saints I may

Praise You, forever. Amen.

BELOVED OF MY SOUL

Holy Spirit, Beloved of my soul, I adore You. Enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, console me. Tell me what I should do. Give me Your orders. I promise to submit myself to all that You desire of me and to accept all that You permit to happen to me. Let me only know Your will. Amen. (*Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book*, p. 22)

COME HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

V. Send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let Us Pray: O God, Who didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen. (*Father Hardon's Catholic Prayer Book*, p. 406, *Large print*, p. 561)

THE ANGELUS

V. The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it done to me according to thy word.

Hail Mary.

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the

promises of Christ.

LET US PRAY. Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

REGINA CAELI

(*Easter to Pentecost Sunday*)

V. Queen of Heaven, rejoice! Alleluia.

R. For He Whom you did merit to bear. Alleluia.

V. Has risen, as He said. Alleluia.

R. Pray for us to God. Alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary. Alleluia.

R. For the Lord is truly risen. Alleluia.

LET US PRAY: O God, Who by the Resurrections of Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, have been pleased to fill the world with joy, grant we beseech You, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, we may receive the joys of eternal life, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.