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Draw Me into Your Friendship

The Spiritual Exercises: A Literal Translation and Contemporary Reading

First Set of Rules of Discernment

The Way the Spirits Work in First Set of rules (First Week):

1. "When we are caught up in a life of sin or perhaps even if we are closed off from God in only one area of our life, the evil spirit is ordinarily accustomed to propose a slothful complacency in the status quo or to entice to a future of ever greater pleasures still to be grasped. The evil one fills our imagination with all kinds of sensual delights and comforts so that there is no will or desire to change the evil direction of our life.

The good spirit will try to make us see the absurdity of the direction which our life has taken. Little by little an uneasiness described sometimes as the "sting" of conscience comes about and a feeling of remorse sets in which stimulates a change from the evil way."

2. "When we are intent upon living a good life and seeking to pursue the lead of God in our life, the tactics of the spirits are just opposite of those described above. The evil spirit proposes to us all the problems and difficulties in living a good life. The evil one attempts to rouse a false sadness for things which will be missed, to instigate an anxiety about persevering when we are so weak, and to suggest innumerable roadblocks in walking the way of the Lord. As so the evil spirit tries discouragement and deception to deter us from growing in the Christ-life. The good spirit, however, strengthens and encourages, consoles, and inspires, establishes a peace and sometimes moves to a firm resolve. To lead a good life gives delight and joy, and no obstacle seems to be so formidable that it cannot be faced and overcome with God's grace. The good spirit thereby continues an upright person's progress in responding to God's continuing invitation."

Spiritual Consolation:

3. "Spiritual Consolation: This term describes our interior life:
 - a. When we find ourselves so on fire with the love of God that we can freely give ourselves over to God and there is no competition with any human person or any created thing. Rather, we begin to see everything and everyone in the context of God, the Creator and Giver of all good gifts.
 - b. When we are saddened, even to the point of tears, for our infidelity to God but at the same time thankful to know God as Savior. Such consolation often comes in a deep realization of ourselves as a sinner before a loving and compassionate God, or in the face of Jesus's Passion when we see that Jesus loves and entrusts himself to God his

Father and to us without limit, or for any other reason which leads us to praise and thank God and serve God better.

- c. When we find our life of faith, hope and love so strengthened and emboldened that the joy of serving God is foremost in our life. More simply said, consolation can be identified with any increase of our faith, our hope, and our love. A deep-down peace comes in just our living life as "being in our Father's house'."

Spiritual Desolation:

4. "Spiritual Desolation: This term describes our interior life:
 - a. When we find ourselves enmeshed in a certain turmoil of spirit or feel ourselves weighed down by a heavy darkness or weight.
 - b. When we experience a lack of faith or hope or love in the distaste of prayer or for any spiritual activity and we know a certain restlessness or tepidity in our carrying on in the service of God.
 - c. When we experience just the opposite effect of what has been described as spiritual consolation. For we will notice that the thoughts of rebelliousness, despair, or selfishness which arise at the time of desolation are in absolute contrast with the thoughts of the praise and service of God which flow during the time of consolation."

Four Guidelines for Desolation:

5. When we find ourselves weighed down by a certain desolation, we should not try to change a previous decision or to come to a new decision. The reason is that in desolation the evil spirit is making an attempt to obstruct the good direction of our life or to change it, and so we would be thwarted from the gentle lead of God and what is more conducive to our own salvation. As a result, at a time of desolation, we hold fast to the decision which guided us during the time before the desolation came to us.
6. Although we should not try to make new decisions at a time of desolation, we should not just sit back and do nothing. We are meant to fight off whatever is making us less than we should be. And so we might try to intensify our prayer, we might take on some penance, or we might make a closer examination of ourselves and our lives of faith.
7. Oftentimes in desolation, we feel that God has left us to fend for ourselves. By faith, we know that God is always with us in the strength and power of grace, but at the time of apparent abandonment we are little aware of God's continuing care and concern. We experience neither the support nor the sweetness of divine love, and our own response lacks fervor and intensity. It is as if we are living a skeletal life of the bare bones of faith.

8. The important attitude to nourish at a time of desolation is patience. Patience can mitigate the frustration, dryness, or emptiness of the desolation period and so allow us to live through it a little less painfully. We should try to recall that everything has its time, and consolation has been ours in the past and will be God's gift in the future. Patience should mark even the efforts we undertake to work against the desolation which afflicts us.

Why Desolation?

9. Three important reasons why we suffer desolation are:
 - a. It is our own fault because we have not lived our life of faith with any effort. We have become tepid and slothful and our very shallowness in the spiritual life has brought about the experience of desolation.
 - b. It is a trial period allowed by God. We find ourselves tested as to whether we love God or just love the gifts of God, whether we continue to follow God's loving invitation in darkness and dryness as well as in light and consolation.
 - c. It is a time when God lets us experience our own poverty and need. We see more clearly that the free gift of consolation is not something we can control, buy or make on our own.

Spiritual Consolation:

10. "When we are enjoying a consolation period, we should use foresight and savor the strength of such a period against the time when we may no longer find ourselves in consolation."
11. A time of consolation should provide the opportunity for a growth in true humility. We can acknowledge with gratitude the gifts we have received and recognize the full gratitude of God's favor. It may be well to take stock how poorly we fare when such consolation is withdrawn. On the other hand, if we are afflicted with desolation, we should take some consolation in knowing that God's grace is always sufficient to follow the way of the Lord."

Three Images of how the False Spirit Works:

12. Image 1: The evil spirit often behaves like a spoiled child. If a person is firm with children, children give up petulant ways of acting. But if a person shows indulgence or weakness in any way, children are merciless in trying to get what they want, stomping their feet in defiance or wheedling their way into favor. So our tactics must include firmness in dealing with the evil spirit in our lives.
13. Image 2: The evil spirit's behavior can also be compared to a false lover. One who loves falsely, uses another for selfish ends, and so people become like objects at one's disposal or like playthings for entertainments or good times. A false lover usually suggests that the so-called intimacy of the relationship be kept secret because of fear that such duplicity will be made

manifest. So does the evil spirit often act in a way to keep temptations secret, and our tactics must be to bring our temptations into light of day to someone like our director, confessor, or some other spiritual person.

14. Image 3: The evil spirit can also work like a shrewd army commander, who carefully maps out the tactics of attack at weak points of defense. The military leader knows that weakness is found in two ways:
 - a. The weakness of fragility or unpreparedness
 - b. The weakness of complacent strength which is self-sufficient pride

The evil spirit's attacks come against us at both these points of weakness. The first kind of weakness is less serious in that we more readily acknowledge our need and cry out for help to God. The second is far more serious and more devastating in its effect upon us so that it can be a more favored tactic of the evil one.