

St. Ignatius' 14 Rules: Living the Daily Discerning Life

Fr. Timothy Gallagher's Translation

Rules for becoming aware and understanding the different movements that are caused in the soul, the good ones, to receive them, and the bad ones, to reject them

1. When a person lives a life of serious sin, the enemy fills the imagination with images of sensual pleasures; the good spirit stings and bites in the person's conscience, God's loving action, calling the person back.
2. When a person tries to avoid sin and to love God, this reverses: now the enemy tries to bite, discourage, and sadden; the good spirit gives courage and strength, inspirations, easing the path forward.
3. When your heart finds joy in God, a sense of God's closeness and love, you are experiencing spiritual consolation. Open your heart to God's gift!
4. When your heart is discouraged, you have little energy for spiritual things, and God feels far away, you are experiencing spiritual desolation. Resist and reject this tactic of enemy!
5. "In time of desolation, never make a change!" When you are in spiritual desolation, never change anything in your spiritual life.
6. When you are in spiritual desolation, use these four means: prayer (ask God's help!), meditation (think of Bible verses, truths about God's faithful love, memories of God's fidelity to you in the past), examination (ask, What am I feeling? How did this start?), and suitable penance (don't just give in and immerse yourself in social media, music, movies . . .). Stand your ground in suitable ways!
7. When you are in spiritual desolation, *think* of this truth: God is giving me all the grace I need to get safely through this desolation.
8. When you are in spiritual desolation, be patient, stay the course, and remember that consolation will return much sooner than the desolation is telling you.
9. Why does a God who loves us allow us to experience spiritual desolation? To help us see changes we need to make; to strengthen us in our resistance to desolation; and to help us not get complacent in the spiritual life.
10. When you are in spiritual consolation, remember that desolation will return at some point, and prepare for it.
11. The mature person of discernment: neither carelessly high in consolation nor despairingly low in desolation, but humble in consolation and trusting in desolation.

12. Resist the enemy's temptations right at their very beginning. This is when it is easiest.
13. When you find burdens on your heart in your spiritual life, temptations, confusion, discouragement, find a wise, competent spiritual person, and talk about it.
14. Identify that area of your life where you are most vulnerable to the enemy's temptations and discouraging lies, and strengthen it.

Resources for Further Learning about St. Ignatius's Rules from Fr. Gallagher

Fr. Gallagher Podcasts:

- Various series on discernment and other topics. The podcasts are free and accessible in the following places:
 - discerninghearts.com
 - Discerning Hearts App
 - YouTube
 - iTunes
 - Google Play

Fr. Gallagher Books:

- [*The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide to Everyday Living*](#) (New York: Crossroad, 2005)
- [*Setting Captives Free: Personal Reflections on Ignatian Discernment of Spirits*](#) (New York: Crossroad, 2018)
- [*Discerning the Will of God: An Ignatian Guide to Christian Decision Making*](#) (New York: Crossroad, 2009)