

Rules for Discernment of Spirits

According to St. Ignatius of Loyola

For a Soul in Sin:

Evil Spirit

- Proposes apparent pleasures
- Fills imagination with sensual delights
- Entices them to remain in their vices
- Allays worries and fears about sin
- Invites to presumption upon God's mercy

Good Spirit

- Makes use of light of reason
- Appeals to conscience
- Stings conscience with healthy guilt
- Fills sinner with remorse
- Invites/Challenges to change

For a Soul Progressing in Virtue:

Evil Spirit

- Harasses with anxiety
- Afflicts with sadness in spirituality
- Raises imaginary obstacles
- Proposes fallacious reasoning
- Disturbs soul with doubts and excuses

Good Spirit

- Gives courage and strength
- Inspires consolation and tears
- Makes progress natural and easy
- Removes obstacles to progress
- Reassures and gives peace

Consolation: Experience of the presence and love of God, gift of tears of contrition or joy that move one toward God, attraction to virtue and sanctity, interior joy, increase in faith and hope and love, peace and quiet in the Lord

Desolation: Experience of darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit, attraction to the low and earthly, experiences of restlessness and trial and temptation, want of faith and want of hope and want of love, feelings of tepid sadness, tiredness, feeling separated from God

Reasons for Desolation

1. Negligence of our spiritual commitments, falling to temptation.
2. God wishes to try our will, and let us grow without his gifts of consolations - test of faithfulness.
3. God wishes to train our intellect, to remind us that consolation is a gift not an achievement, to teach us humility and that we are wholly dependent upon Him.

Responses to Desolation

- Do not make a change in commitments or decisions made during consolation.
- Intensify prayer and examination of conscience.
- Resist temptation and agitation proposed by the enemy.
- Persevere in patience with trust in God's graces that are always available.

Responses to Consolation

- Prepare for coming desolation by taking and storing strength.
- Acts of humility during consolation act as reminders that this consolation is pure gift.

Ways the Enemy Acts Towards Us

- Like an accuser (Satan is accusative/*diabolos*/diabolical - "To throw through") - in an enraged manner, he accusations both at and through me.
 - *Agere Contra* ("to go against"): The enemy becomes weak, loses courage, and turns to flight as soon as one leading a spiritual life faces his temptations boldly, and does exactly the opposite of what the enemy suggests.
- Like a false lover (Satan is a liar, and lies love darkness) - He seeks to remain hidden and does not want to be discovered.
 - *Agere Contra*: Shine light! Manifest sins and temptations to a confessor or some other spiritual person who understands his deceits and malicious designs.
- Like an enemy army commander (Satan is the adversary - he is against us and our call to holiness) - Seizes upon plundering the weak points in our defenses.
 - *Agere Contra*: Identify and build up defenses in weak areas by praying for and practicing virtue, avoid circumstances, Word of God.