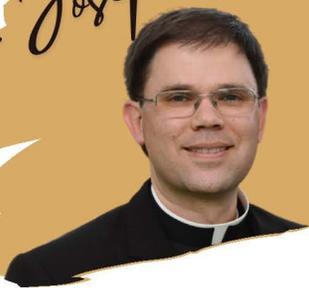




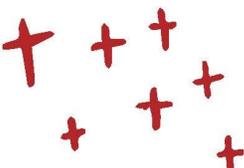
2023  
**LENTEN MISSION  
TALK NOTES**



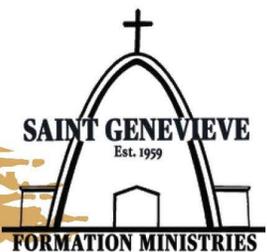
*Presenter:*  
*Fr. Joseph Tregre*



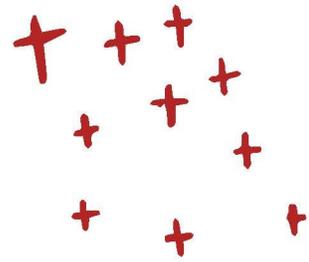
*Mission Topic:*  
**St. Ignatius'  
Discernment  
of Spirits for  
Lenten Prayer**



**ST. GENEVIEVE CATHOLIC CHURCH**



# 14 RULES OF DISCERNMENT BY ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA



## Rule I:

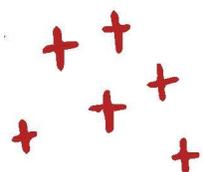
In the persons who go from mortal sin to mortal sin, the enemy is commonly used to propose to them **apparent pleasures**, making them imagine sensual delights and pleasures in order to hold them more and make them grow in their vices and sins. In these persons the good spirit uses the opposite method, **pricking them** and **biting their consciences** through the process of reason.

**A.** What are **apparent pleasures** in my life to which God is calling me to exercise prayer, fasting, and almsgiving this Lent?

**B.** What material pleasures (e.g. overeating/drinking, excessive use of the smartphone or streaming television, laziness or apathy) have I experienced God **pricking** or **biting my conscience** in this new year?

**C.** What venial or mortal sin (e.g. pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, laziness) can I work on this Lent?

**D.** What is a Lenten resolution I can make for each of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving?



LENT



## Rule II:

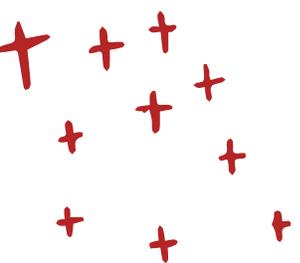
In the persons who are going on intensely cleansing their sins and rising from good to better in the service of God our Lord, it is the method contrary to that in the first rule, for then it is the way of the evil spirit to **bite, sadden, and put obstacles, disquieting with false reasons**, that one may not go on; and it is proper to the good to give **courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and quiet, easing, and putting away all obstacles**, that one may go on in well doing.

**A.** When trying to overcome sin in our lives, we feel the good spirit **prick and bite** our **conscience** when considering an evil action (Rule #1). However, when seeking to perform some virtue or holy action the opposite happens, the good spirit **encourages** us and the bad spirit **bites and saddens**.

**B.** For those going from virtue to virtue, the good spirit encourages us and the bad spirit tries to inhibit us. For example, if I am trying to fast from lunch on Friday's of Lent, the bad spirit may try to discourage me with **sadness and false reasons**, while the good spirit will encourage me with **courage and strength**.

**C.** Another example, if God is calling me to make a holy hour every Friday of Lent, the good spirit may encourage me with **consolations, easing, and putting away all obstacles** and the bad spirit may **sadden** me with thoughts of "I don't know how to pray" or "I won't be able to make a holy hour."

**D.** A third example, perhaps God is calling my spouse and I to practice abstinence during Lent and pray a daily or weekly rosary together. The bad spirit may **disquiet me with false reasons** telling me that my spouse will not want to pray with me. While, the good spirit may draw me through **tears and inspirations** to choose prayer and ask my spouse to pray with me.



## Rule III:

**Of Spiritual Consolation.** I call it consolation when some **interior movement** in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord; and when it can in consequence love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but in the Creator of them all.

Likewise, when it sheds tears that move to the love of its Lord, whether out of sorrow for one's sins, or for the passion of Christ our Lord, or because of other things directly connected with his service and praise.

Finally, I call consolation every increase in hope, faith, and charity, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, **quieting it** and **giving it peace** in its Creator and Lord.

**A.** What is the relationship of prayer and fasting? Fasting is not an end of itself but fills us with the love of God when partnered with prayer.

**B.** Our soul can become **inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord** when we spend more time in prayer. By denying something in fasting and uniting that fast with increased prayer, we realize the first statement of Rule #3 – **in consequence [we] love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but in the Creator of them all.**

**C.** In reference to the second line of Rule #3 – [Spiritual Consolation] **sheds tears that move to the love of its Lord...** – fasting helps us connect to Jesus and the Cross. Fasting can become an expiatory sacrifice for our sins. Fasting can also help us identify with the Passion of Jesus.

**D.** Fasting can also **quiet** one's soul and bring **peace**. Fasting creates the space for prayer and God in our lives to bring **interior joy** and **every increase in hope, faith, and charity.**



## Rule IV:

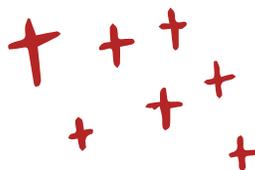
**Of Spiritual Desolation.** I call desolation all the contrary of the third rule, such as **darkness of soul**, disturbance in it, movement to things low and earthly, the unquiet of different agitations and temptations, moving to want of confidence, without hope, without love, when one finds oneself all lazy, tepid, sad, and **as if separated from his Creator and Lord**. Because, as consolation is contrary to desolation, in the same way the thoughts which come from consolation are contrary to the thoughts which come from desolation.

**A. Spiritual Desolation** is a movement that leads to **low** and **earthly things**. We can begin Lent in spiritual consolation with many consolations and encouragements but over time we can begin to experience the desert. The initial fervor of Lent wears off and the initial excitement from God's initial graces begin to feel not as present. God has not removed himself from us but is calling us to go deeper.

**B.** The Israelites were initially in awe and wonder of God's miraculous deeds to deliver them from the slavery of Egypt. However, once in the desert journey, they complained and longed for the fleshpots of Egypt (Ex. 16). God provided them heavenly manna but instead of entering more deeply into the mystery of God's love for them, they entered **spiritual desolation** and longed for **low** and **earthly things** of the past. God had given them the supernatural food of the heavenly manna but they longed for the fleshpots of Egypt.

**C.** Imagine a freshwater river flowing underneath a sandy desert. The desert is the experience of our dryness or our hunger for **low** and **earthly things**, but God is inviting us more deeply into His Love in these freshwater streams of His Living Spirit flowing underneath the surface of our earthly desires. If we can but hold out during Lent and not return to our "fleshpots" but move more deeply into prayer, we will encounter the **oasis of God's love for us**.

**D.** Imagine wanting your favorite dessert but not being able to have it right away. You have to wait until an appointed time. That waiting increases our desire for this treat and makes it all the more delectable once we have it. The **waiting of Lent** is **expanding our desire** for God's love. Like a balloon that is stretched before being blown up or receiving a new wineskin to receive new wine (Mt. 9:17), Lent is an invitation to experience a deeper encounter of God's joy and love for us.



## Rule V:

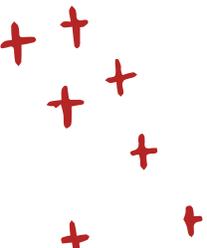
In time of desolation **never to make a change**; but to be firm and constant in the resolutions and determination in which one was the day preceding such desolation, or in the determination in which he was in the preceding consolation. Because, as in consolation it is rather the good spirit who guides and counsels us, so in desolation it is the bad, with whose counsels we cannot take a course to decide rightly.

**A.** NEVER MAKE A CHANGE in time of spiritual desolation. If we feel the effects of Spiritual Desolation Rule #4 – **darkness, disturbance, movement to low and earthly things**, these are not signs to change our Lenten resolutions. St. Ignatius calls us in time of desolation to be **firm and constant in resolutions and determination in which one was**. We were in spiritual consolation when we formed and committed to our resolutions at the beginning of Lent. It is the good spirit who counsels us during time of spiritual consolation and the bad spirit who counsels us in time of spiritual desolation. Do not let the bad spirit trick us into stopping or changing our resolutions mid-Lent.

**B.** For example, I prayerfully decided during the Mardi Gras holidays that I would commit for the first time or re-commit to praying a daily rosary as Our Lady of Fatima calls us to. I started praying the rosary every day for Lent, and I enjoyed it. It felt really good the first two weeks of Lent to keep up this popular pious practice cherished by so many Catholics. However, my initial fervor began to wear off. I begin to experience the rosary as tedious and tiresome. I no longer wanted to pray it every day.

I thought that maybe praying the rosary every day for Lent was biting off more than I could chew, the commitment was too big. Maybe I only need to pray the rosary daily twice a week.

I begin only praying the rosary twice a week and I'm successful at this. However, my experience of the rosary never becomes more than saying a bunch of Hail Mary's and Our Father's and Glory Be's.



How else could this have gone? I do not reduce how often I pray the rosary and remain committed to every day. I get over the “hump” of the dryness of the rosary and it becomes very natural for me. 4-5 weeks into Lent, praying the rosary during Holy Week, I identify more than every with the Passion of Jesus. The rosary becomes much more alive and a spiritual experience than I ever had before.

What happened here? Instead of changing one’s resolution to pray the rosary every day during Lent during a time of spiritual desolation, one continued to pray the daily rosary. The season of spiritual desolation gave way to a new season of spiritual consolation in which the rosary was more impactful than ever before.

## Rule VI:

Although in desolation we ought not to change our first resolutions, it is very helpful intensely to **change ourselves** against the same desolation, as by **insisting more on prayer, meditation, on much examination**, and by giving ourselves more scope in some suitable way of doing penance.

**A.** In times of spiritual desolation, we should not only NOT CHANGE our resolutions, but we should act against the desolation with **more prayer, meditation, and much examination**.

**B.** For example, if I committed to praying a holy hour every Friday of Lent, and if I’m beginning to experience distractions and lack of desire to stay the whole hour, I should not only stay the whole hour but stay for an extra 10 minutes.

Or, if I committed to praying a daily rosary for Lent, and if I’m starting to feel discouraged and want to pray the rosary less often or not complete it, I should pray an extra 6th decade.

Or, if I committed to fasting every Friday of Lent but St. Joseph’s Feast day fall’s on a Friday of Lent, if I am experiencing spiritual desolation, I should consider maintaining my fast.



## Rule VII:

Let him who is in desolation consider how the Lord has left him in trial in his natural powers, in order to resist the different agitations and temptations of the enemy; since he can with the Divine help, which always remains to him, though he does not clearly perceive it: because the Lord has taken him from his great fervor, great love, and intense grace, leaving him, however, grace enough for eternal salvation.

**A.** At times we experience the “Lenten Plateau”. The initial fervor and devotion of Lent can wear off and we come to a cross-road mid-Lent. We can choose to truly choose the grace God has for us this Lent or we can crawfish back and miss it! God gives us initial fervor, great love, and intense grace, but at some point He will leave us in our natural powers to choose for ourselves with grace enough for eternal salvation.

**B.** God normally has deeper graces for us each Lent that we may not even initially be aware of at the onset. One gift of prayer and penance is that fasting reveals to us areas of insecurity and healing that we need. Often times our material attachments mask areas of insecurity in our lives that leads us to lean on the crutch of our addictions or disordered attachments. We are holding onto different things because they give us a false sense of comfort and security. When those things are removed our insecurities are exposed.

**C.** Often times during this “Lenten Plateau,” when we are drawn into the desert with our Lord, if we hang in there, we may experience an oasis of grace and healing and strengthening and new truth in our lives.



## Rule VIII:

Let him who is in desolation **labor to be in patience**, which is contrary to the vexations which come to him: and let him think that he will **soon be consoled**, employing against the desolation the devices, as is said in the sixth rule.

**A.** If we push through this “Lenten Plateau” spiritual desolation will give way to spiritual consolation. There is always light at the end of the tunnel. Be encouraged that this time in the desert is only temporary and the Lord will lead you back to lush and fresh green pastures.

**B.** This “Lenten Plateau” is a time of deeper surrender. We may have inner fears or “walls” that our prayer and fasting is butting up against. We may experience spiritual desolation but spiritual consolation may be right around the corner if we can accept a new truth, a healing, let down a “wall.”

**C.** “Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2).

## Rule IX:

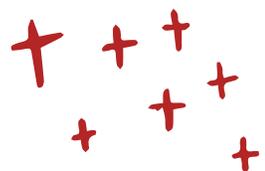
There are three principal reasons why we find ourselves desolate.

The first is, because of our being **tepid, lazy, or negligent in our spiritual exercises**; and so through our faults, spiritual consolation withdraws from us.

The second, **to try us** and see how much we are and how much we let ourselves out in his service and praise without such great pay of consolation and great graces.

The third, to give us true acquaintance and knowledge, that we may interiorly feel that **it is not ours** to get or keep great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation, but that **all is the gift and grace of God our Lord**, and that we may not build a nest in a thing not ours, raising our intellect into some pride or vainglory, attributing to us devotion or the other things of the spiritual consolation.

**A.** In Rule #9, St. Ignatius gives us three reasons why we may experience spiritual desolation: (1) our fault, sin, weakness...we put ourselves there; (2) as a trial for our charity; (3) recognize that all is grace from God...we cannot make our own spiritual consolation.



## Rule X:

Let him who is in consolation think how he will be in the desolation which will come after, taking new strength for then.

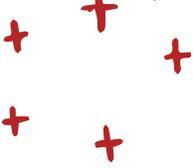
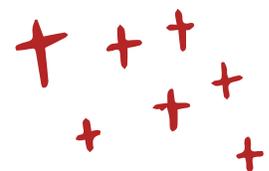
- A. When things are going well, we should pray for wisdom and guidance to be prepared for the spiritual desolation that will come at some point.
- B. During times of spiritual consolation, we should remind ourselves how much we are loved by God and blessed. Because in times of spiritual desolation we may not “feel” God’s love, but we can intellectually remind ourselves of it.
- C. Remind oneself of one’s spiritual practices in times of spiritual consolation so that we can remain committed to them in times of spiritual desolation.
- D. Times of spiritual consolation are good times within the safety of the consolation and the good spirit being the predominant voice for deeper reflection of one’s life and for healing prayer.

## Rule XI:

Let him who is consoled see to humbling himself and lowering himself as much as he can, thinking how little he is able for in the time of desolation without such grace or consolation.

On the contrary, let him who is in desolation think that he can do much with the grace sufficient to resist all his enemies, taking strength in his Creator and Lord.

- A. In times of spiritual consolation, we should humble ourselves and remember that all is grace from God. “But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Mt. 19:30).
- B. In times of spiritual desolation, we should remember that we have received every **sufficient grace** to choose God’s will. “For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” (Ps. 91:11-12).



**C.** Jesus called people of every walk of life to follow him and be his disciple (e.g. tax collectors, fishermen, scribes, pharisees, etc.). We are all equal in God's eyes as his children, regardless of our worldly success or fame. We are all on an equal playing field and in need of God's grace. Rule #11 reminds us to be humble recognizing all is grace from God.

**D.** Lent can be a time of returning back to basics - attend weekly Mass, attend daily Mass if possible, pray a daily rosary, begin and end our day in prayer, pray before meals, make a weekly holy hour of Eucharistic adoration, etc.

## **Rule XII:**

The evil spirit often behaves like a spoiled child. If a person is firm with children, children give up childish 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 whining their way into favor. So our tactics must include firmness in dealing with the evil spirit in our lives.

**A.** Sin can be like a snowball rolling down a mountain that becomes an avalanche. If it is stopped in the beginning, it is easy but if the temptation is allowed to continue it will become an avalanche that cannot be stopped.

**B.** Ignatian 3-fold steps to a decision: (1) Awareness (2) Understand (3) Act. Accept what is of God and reject what is bad. When our thoughts begin to move toward **low and earthly things**, reject these thoughts and return to holier thoughts in the time of spiritual consolation.

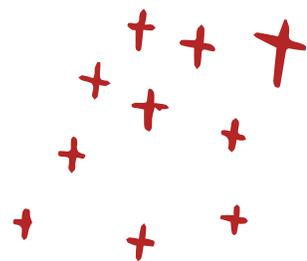
**C.** St. Ignatius advises to be attentive to both feelings and thoughts when making decisions; however, the final decision is made by reason alone. The rules of discernment are not a feeling based approach to decision-making but a reason based approach that accounts for feelings and the movements of the heart. In this way wisdom and love are both part of decision-making.

**D.** The Ignatian daily examen prayer, which is a daily reflection on where God was present in our lives and where we resisted him in a given day, can be applied here. When we have "missed the mark" in pursuing God's daily will, we should reflect when we first began to deviate from his will and pray for the resolve to be more resolute in the future. Every action should have a good beginning, middle, and end.

## Rule XIII:

Likewise, he acts as a licentious lover in wanting to be **secret and not revealed**. For, as the licentious man who, speaking for an evil purpose, solicits a daughter of a good father or a wife of a good husband, wants his words and persuasions to be secret, and the contrary displeases him very much, when the daughter reveals to her father or the wife to her husband his licentious words and depraved intention, because he easily gathers that he will not be able to succeed with the undertaking begun; in the same way, when the enemy of human nature brings his wiles and persuasions to the just soul, he wants and desires that they be received and **kept in secret**; but when one reveals them to his good Confessor or to another spiritual person that knows his deceits and evil ends, it is very grievous to him, because he gathers, **from his manifest deceits being discovered, that he will not be able to succeed with his wickedness begun**.

- A.** We should all make a good confession every Lent. God asks us to confess to a priest to receive sacramental absolution for the practical accountability part of confessing to another person. This sin is no longer only known to us but now is has been brought to the light through confession. Of course, nothing is hidden from God who is light.
- B.** We can also use the Examen prayer to make a partial general confession on a particular area of sin or healing we are experiencing.
- C.** Membership in a bible study or prayer group is also good for accountability during Lent.
- D.** In regard to pornography, Covenant Eyes or other accountability apps for smartphones are encouraged.



## Rule XIV:

Likewise, he behaves as a chief bent on conquering and robbing what he desires: for, as a captain and chief of the army, pitching his camp, and looking at the forces or defenses of a stronghold, attacks it on the **weakest side**, in like manner the enemy of human nature, roaming about, looks in turn at all our virtues, theological, cardinal and moral; and where he finds us weakest and most in need for our eternal salvation, there he attacks us and aims at taking us."

- A.** "And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated" (2 Cor. 12:7). We all have a predominant weakness. What is yours? This should always be an area of focus for our Lent.
- B.** "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses...; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (1 Cor. 12:9, 10).
- C.** The Examen prayer is particularly useful when addressing out primary fault. Our primary fault should be daily examined.
- D.** Studying the 4 Catholic Temperaments can assist us in identifying our primary fault.

**Rules cited from:** Gallagher, Timothy M. [The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living](#). The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005.

