

St. Peter Catholic Church

Everyday Discernment

Inviting God into your Decisions

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Ignatian Spirituality Team
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Everyday Discernment

Inviting God into your Decisions

This guide was developed by St. Peter Ignatian Spirituality Team members to be used as a companion course to: *“What’s your Decision? How to Make Choices with Confidence and Clarity”* by J. Michael Sparough, Jim Manney and Tim Hipkind, SJ

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Week 1

So God said to him: Because you asked for this—you did not ask for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies—but you asked for discernment to know what is right—I now do as you request. I give you a heart so wise and discerning that there has never been anyone like you until now, nor after you will there be anyone to equal you. 1 Kings 3: 11-12

OPENING PRAYER

**All: Come Holy Spirit
Fill the hearts of your faithful
And enkindle in them the fire of your love**

Presider: God of heaven and earth,
Creating God and Sustainer of Life,
We give you praise

**All: You have made us in Your image,
And call us to be Your likeness of love
and truth,
We give You praise.**

Presider: Son of God, Sun of Justice,
Light, Life and Source of Hope,
We give you praise

**All: You are the Incarnate God, Jesus,
Who died that we might live forever,
We give you praise.**

Presider: Holy Spirit, our Advocate,
Spirit of Fire that dwells within our hearts,
We give you praise.

All: You who guide us on our journey of faith,
We give you praise.

PSALM 139

Alternate sides

Yahweh, you search me and you know me.
You know when I am standing or sitting.
You perceive my thoughts from far away.

Whether I walk or lie down, you are watching;
You are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is even on my tongue, Yahweh,
You know it completely

Close behind and in front, you hem me in,
Shielding me with your hand.
Such knowledge is beyond my understanding,
Too high beyond my reach,

If I climb to the heavens, you are there;
There, too, if I sink to Sheol.
If I flew to the point of sunrise-
Or far across the sea-
Your hand would still be guiding me,
Your right hand holding me.

All:

You created my inmost being
And knit me in my mother's womb.
For all these mysteries-
For the wonder of myself,
For the wonder of your works—
I thank you.

Workshop Introduction and Objectives

Welcome to “Everyday Discernment” — an Ignatian Approach of inviting God into your decisions.

This workshop will be an exploration of the ways that God speaks to us and about the spiritual practice of discernment to understand God’s voice in that communication. We will be using as our main source the writings of St. Ignatius of Loyola which are regarded as containing the clearest and most concrete teaching on discernment of spirits within the Christian tradition.ⁱ

In the process you will learn about and have an opportunity to apply practices and tools that will serve you well in your efforts to become more attuned to God and to overcome obstacles that faithful persons encounter in their efforts to grow spiritually.

By the end of this workshop you should:

- Be more aware of how God is active in your everyday life
- Recognize how God is moving within you
- Have tested some approaches for discerning God’s will
- Have experience with applying the rules as described by St. Ignatius for the discernment of spirits
- Have a framework for making decisions

Agenda - Week 1

In today’s session we will:

- Explore how our inner experience reveals how God is speaking to us
- Introduce the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits
- Apply the rules to a case study
- Review the prayer assignment for the coming week



Everyday Discernment
Inviting God into your Decisions

Our inner experience reveals what God is saying to us.

(Inner experience include physical sensations or responses, intuitions, inner dialogue with ourselves, insights, epiphanies, etc.)

We have different levels of comfort and familiarity with paying attention to our inner experience. For some of us it is easy— we are aware of our inner dialogue and our physical sensations. Others of us are accustomed to ignoring inner experiences.

The following case describes a woman, who we will be calling Louise, as she attends to her own inner experience.

Case 1 - Louiseⁱⁱ

1. I had been involved in my design business for ten years had found it artistically satisfying and financially profitable. Since my children were all going about their own adult lives, I used this business to replace them. I became a compulsive worker. The business consumed most of my waking hours, and these hours became longer. The terrific stress of such work began to sap all pleasure from it; and still, I worked on. God was in my life, but I paid scant attention to him. There was, of course, Sunday and a good moral life, but no acknowledged relationship with God other than that. My youngest daughter told me that I was a legalistic Catholic who was not a Christian. I protested, sometimes quite loudly, trying to defend my spiritual mediocrity. She prayed for me.

2. Many things started leading to Christ, too many to relate them all here. The most prominent was a sermon one Sunday at the cathedral. I began to be on fire. I actually began to pray daily (other than programmed prayer). It seemed stilted and foreign to me, but I remained faithful to it. I gave up television and began reading Merton.

3. In June I went on an eight-day retreat. That did it. I was in love. Now that my allegiance was sworn to Christ and his people, what, I asked myself, do I do with this bloodsucking business? I looked at it in every way I could think of; and, even though I had nothing in the wings that would replace it, I still felt and thought it was time to let it go. I went home and proceeded to start dissolving it. My husband couldn't quite understand all of this, but he did like the change in me and so made no effort to influence my decision.

4. I began my ministry of love by starting two Bible-prayer groups (billed as Praise and Thanks Groups) at a retirement center. I am now in my third year with them. I also began to facilitate two Bible-study groups at my parish. They did not have a program before this one. My next request from God was to have two groups on Saturday at the county jail, one for women and one (with a male partner) for the men inmates. My husband supported my missionary work; he was happy about it and I was overjoyed by it. All of this had been going on for quite a while. I was gradually being asked for more personal detachment and I had been willing to respond.

5. Now out of the clear blue came a phone call from Ed, a man I knew. He told me that the executives at

his agency were no longer pleased with the style of the local designer and that they would like me to give a fresh and residential feeling to their executive offices. They had heard about my work and thought they would like this style. My response was, "It sounds wonderful, but I have retired, so I guess I can't do it." Ed proceeded, "They will give a generous retainer and let you have a free hand within an appropriate budget. We are redoing all the offices within the next three years and, of course, you are the choice for that also." By this time, I was no longer in the moment. My dream button has been activated by the most exciting offer of my career as a designer. I found myself saying, "Yes, I will do it. Thank you for thinking of me."

6. I don't think I was off the phone more than ten minutes when physical symptoms began. I was breathing heavily. I almost felt sick to my stomach. My mind was screaming, "What have I done?" But, then, other thoughts came to me, encouraging me to follow through on what I had done: No one really cares whether I do these little ministry things or not; the church can get along very nicely without my efforts; the people will just gravitate to someone or something else; I won't even be missed. None of these thoughts were there before the phone call from Ed.

7. It seemed I had barely enough strength to telephone my friend in whom I had confided over the years. She had come home for a reason she couldn't explain until after my call. I told her what had happened and how horrified and depressed I felt. She calmly recited all the reasons I had given in the past for retiring.

8. My next call was to my daughter. When I told her the whole story, her comment about the "little despair" scenario was, "Mom, that is all lies. We both know the value of the things you are doing and why you are doing them." This stunned me. Suddenly all was clear. I felt peace again. Poor God, I am so shallow and faithless, and he still showers me with love and grace.

9. I hung up and was very certain of my next move: I would call Ed and gracefully decline. I told him I had been retired just long enough to be out of touch with my profession and promised to recommend another designer who would do a fine job for them.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is happening to Louise?
 2. Describe how God is speaking to her through her inner experience in each paragraph.
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St. Ignatius of Loyola — A Brief History

St. Ignatius of Loyola was born in 1491, one of 13 children of a family of minor nobility in northern Spain.

As a young man Ignatius Loyola was inflamed by the ideals of courtly love and knighthood and dreamed of doing great deeds.

But in 1521 Ignatius was gravely wounded in a battle with the French. While recuperating, Ignatius Loyola experienced a conversion. Reading the lives of Jesus and the saints made Ignatius happy and aroused desires to do great things. Ignatius realized that these feelings were clues to God's direction for him.

Over the years, Ignatius became expert in the art of spiritual direction. He collected his insights, prayers, and suggestions in his book the *Spiritual Exercises*, one of the most influential books on the spiritual life ever written. With a small group of friends, Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. Ignatius conceived the Jesuits as "contemplatives in action."ⁱⁱⁱ It is no coincidence that Ignatian spirituality is often called a spirituality for everyday life.

What is discernment?

Discernment is the spiritual practice of inviting God into our lives and life choices.

In discernment we let God speak, not only allowing God to lead, but allowing God to be with us. It is a daily practice of journeying with God toward what is best for us and for the world.

When we add discernment to our decision making the outcome will be different than if we are taking an analytical pros and cons type approach. In discernment we are attuned to the option that is God's will — the option that is for the greater good of God and to which we take a neutral or indifferent stance on the outcome.^{iv} A decision provides a conclusion whereas discernment provides a direction.

Some situations in which we might discern God's will for us are:

- Choosing between two job offers or between a job offer and remaining in a current role.
- Accepting or rejecting a marriage proposal.
- Deciding on which ministry to focus our time.
- Choosing among options for spending a windfall.
- Discerning a vocation.

The kinds of decisions that we will be talking about are when we are making a choice between two (or more) good options in which both options are morally permissible.

Rules for the Discernment of Spirits

In his autobiography Ignatius writes about his own discernment process and the different interior movements that he experienced as he imagined his future as he was convalescing from his battle injuries — sad after considering military exploits, happy when considering imitating the saints.^v He describes how one day his eyes were partially opened and he came to perceive that different spirits were moving him; one coming from the devil, the other from God (Autobiography, no. 8).^{vi}

Ignatius believed that these interior movements were caused by “good spirits” and “evil spirits.” We want to follow the action of the good spirit and reject the action of an evil spirit. The word discernment comes from an ancient word for “sift” or “separate.” The discernment of spirits is the art of sifting through spiritual experiences to distinguish what is from God and what is not. Discernment of spirits is a way to understand God’s will or desire for us in our life.

Referring to good and evil spirits may seem odd to us. Remember that Ignatius lived and wrote centuries before our present age of modern psychology which gives us other names for what Ignatius calls good and evil spirits. Yet his language is useful because it recognizes the reality of evil which is both greater than we are and part of who we are. Our hearts are divided between good and evil impulses. To call these “spirits” recognizes the spiritual dimension of this inner struggle.

Included in the Spiritual Exercises are Rules for the Discernment of Spirits. This is the process by which we seek to distinguish between different kinds of spiritual stirrings in our hearts, identifying those that are of God and those that are not, in order to accept the former and to reject the latter.^{vii}

See the Appendix for the full text of The Rules for Discernment of Spirits.

Case 2 - Carl

1. Carl is a college student who goes to the chapel for noon Mass every day. The reading for the day is from Galatians 5:16-24. The homilist focuses on verse 22: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.”* Peace and joy, he says, are the signs of the Holy Spirit. He quotes also from noted spiritual writers who emphasize this point and relates it especially to the teaching of St. Ignatius of Loyola on discernment of spirits.
2. Carl has for some time now felt very dry when he prays. He is saddened because God seems absent from his life. What the homilist said convinces him that the Holy Spirit cannot be present and active in his life-that he must have turned away from God. He feels discouraged about ever becoming a really good Christian.
3. In this state of mind, he turns to one of his teachers in whose learning and experience and good judgment he has great trust. He opens up and asks for help.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is happening to Carl?
2. What are his feelings in regard to his life situation?
3. Is Carl a spiritually maturing or spiritually regressing person?
4. Is he experiencing spiritual consolation or spiritual desolation? How do you know?
5. What are some of the interior experiences that accompany this movement?

CLOSING PRAYER: TEACH ME TO LISTEN^{viii}

Teach me to listen, O God, to those nearest me, my family, my friends, my co-workers.

Help me to be aware that no matter what words I hear, the message is, “Accept the person I am. Listen to me.”

Teach me to listen, my caring God, to those far from me – the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

Teach me to listen, O God my Mother, to myself. Help me to be less afraid to trust the voice inside – in the deepest part of me.

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice – in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence.

Teach me, Lord, to listen.

Amen.

Week 1 assignment

Prayer during the week

This week we will continue to focus on being aware of and understanding our own interior experience. For the next five weeks, you will need to set aside 30-45 minutes daily to complete the daily prayer exercises described here. Have a journal handy to briefly record your experiences and reactions. Writing about an experience, even if it is just bullets, allows us to reflect on and enhances our understanding of that event.

1. Pray the Examen of Consciousness daily.

Daily praying of the Examen is a valuable practice for discernment as it provides an opportunity to notice what is happening in our inner spiritual experience and to understand what is stirring in our hearts and thoughts.^{ix} It is to be experienced as a simple prayer of daily review that can be accomplished in 10-15 minutes. See pages 63-66 in *What's Your Decision?* for more information on the Examen.

- As you review the day, consider not just your actions but also your thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Briefly journal about your experience each day. How did it go? Any insights?
- At least once during the week, pray the Examen entitled "Spiritual Freedom" that starts on page 5 of *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen* and briefly journal about your experience.

2. Review the experience recalled in the pre-work exercise "Discerning God's Presence in my Life." Journal your answer to the following questions:

- Where do you see examples of consolation? Desolation?
- How did you respond to those conditions?
- Is this a typical response for you?

3. Complete the worksheet "Recalling a Discernment Experience" that is on page 8.

4. Read Chapters 1-3 (pages 1-42) and Chapter 6 (pages 67-70) in *What's Your Decision?*

- See the Reflection Questions on pages 9 in the Participant Guide. Note any insights or questions in your Journal.
- Optional: Read more about rules 1-4 on pages 72-77 in *What's Your Decision?*

5. In your prayer time immediately before our next meeting, review the completed "Recalling a Discernment Experience" worksheet and any journal notes that you made. We'll be sharing from our notes.

- What stands out? What is happening in your inner experience? Are you seeing any patterns?
- Any surprises or new insights? Any questions?



Recalling a Discernment Experience

Grace:

I ask God for a deeper appreciation of God's presence in my life, and my own inner movements.

Instructions:

Place yourself in God's presence and prayerfully remember a significant decision that you had to make. Choose a decision to reflect on in which you were making a choice between two (or more) good options in which both options are morally permissible. Some examples are:

- *Choosing between two job offers or between a job offer and remaining in a current role.*
- *Accepting or rejecting a marriage proposal.*
- *Deciding on which volunteer activity or church ministry to contribute your time.*
- *Choosing among options for spending a windfall.*

1. What were the circumstances of the decision?

2. How difficult was this decision to make? Why?

3. What were some of your feelings, thoughts, and desires as you pondered?

4. How did you experience God's presence as you were making the decision? After the decision was made?

5. Where do you see examples of consolation? Desolation?

6. What changes did you notice within yourself either as a result of or the process of making the decision?

7. Do you notice anything new happening in you now as you remember and relive the decision?

What's Your Decision? Reflection Questions

The process of discerning God's will in our lives begins with reflection. Focus on your prayer, relationships or daily activities — including what you are reading and learning. God speaks to us in all experience and reveals to us who God is and how God is acting in our midst. Reflection is different from “thinking about it” or “processing it.” Faith leads us to look at our unfolding experience from the perspective of God's presence and action.^x

The questions that follow on each of the *What's Your Decision?* chapters are intended to enhance your understanding and provide consideration for further prayer.

Write responses in your journal.

Chapter 1-First Principles

1. How do you understand spiritual freedom? Why is spiritual freedom important for discernment?
2. How do our emotions fit into decision making? How can they be helpful?
3. How is Ignatian decision making like a spiraling circle?

Chapter 2 – Why Are Good Decisions So Hard to Make? Week 1

1. In chapter 1, page 6, the authors say, “...the mechanics of Ignatian discernment consist largely of techniques to free ourselves of attachments to desires and ideas that lead us astray.” What are some of the things described in this chapter that can get in the way of our spiritual freedom? Which of these are most significant for you?
2. What does Ignatius say is the purpose of life? How does personal happiness relate to our purpose?
3. In what ways does Ignatian decision making embrace the process as a struggle?

Chapter 3 – Ignatius of Loyola's Big Discovery

1. What was Ignatius' great insight while recovering from his wounds that led to his conversion?
2. What is your image of God? What was your childhood image of God? How has your image of God changed over the years?
3. The author describes four truths crucial for the process of decision making. Intellectually understanding a concept and putting it into practice can be a big step. Which of these truths are likely to be challenging for you?

Week 2

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:2

OPENING PRAYER

**All: Come Holy Spirit
Fill the hearts of your faithful
And enkindle in them the fire of your love**

Presider: God of heaven and earth,
Creating God and Sustainer of Life,
We give you praise

**All: You have made us in Your image,
And call us to be Your likeness of love
and truth,
We give You praise.**

Presider: Son of God, Sun of Justice,
Light, Life and Source of Hope,
We give you praise

**All: You are the Incarnate God, Jesus,
Who died that we might live forever,
We give you praise.**

Presider: Holy Spirit, our Advocate,
Spirit of Fire that dwells within our hearts,
We give you praise.

All: You who guide us on our journey of faith,
We give you praise.

PSALM 139

Alternate sides

Yahweh, you search me and you know me.
You know when I am standing or sitting.
You perceive my thoughts from far away.

Whether I walk or lie down, you are watching;
You are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is even on my tongue, Yahweh,
You know it completely

Close behind and in front, you hem me in,
Shielding me with your hand.
Such knowledge is beyond my understanding,
Too high beyond my reach,

If I climb to the heavens, you are there;
There, too, if I sink to Sheol.
If I flew to the point of sunrise-
Or far across the sea-
Your hand would still be guiding me,
Your right hand holding me.

All:

You created my inmost being
And knit me in my mother's womb.
For all these mysteries-
For the wonder of myself,
For the wonder of your works—
I thank you.



Everyday Discernment

Inviting God into your Decisions

Agenda - Week 2

In today's session we will:

- Listen to and share insights from this week's prayer in Holy Listening
- Explore the rules for dealing with spiritual desolation (Rules 5-8)
- Describe reasons for desolation (Rules 9-11)
- Review the prayer assignment for the coming week

Holy Listening

Holy Listening is a way of listening to one another for the movement of God. It is an exercise in listening deeply. We listen to what is being said, to what is not said and for how the Holy Spirit is moving us as we listen. So how do we accomplish this? We listen without comment; we observe silence and let the Spirit speak to us. In Holy Listening:

- Each person in the circle has an opportunity to respond to the given question or topic. The circle moves in a clockwise fashion.
- Holy listening is our willingness and intention to be present, open, reverent, nonjudgmental, and compassionate. Our job as listeners is to note how the Spirit is moving primarily in ourselves. Listeners may wish to take brief notes. Note anything that the Spirit stirs up in you such as a(n):
 - o image
 - o pattern
 - o insight
 - o scripture
- When the circle is completed listeners offer any insights starting with the person to the right of the first person who spoke
- Use "I" language. For example: "I heard great sorrow in your voice," "I saw you cross your arms at your heart as you shared..." "I had the image of a stormy sky..." "I was reminded of the scripture of the woman at the well..."
- Focus on how the Spirit moved in you.
- Avoid giving advice or problem solving.

Holy Listening Focus Question

This past week, one of your Examen was on "*Spiritual Freedom*." You also contemplated your experience with consolation and desolation in a discernment: "*Recalling a Discernment Experience*." What experience, awareness, understanding or feeling did you have in your prayer this week?

Case 3 - Olga^{xi}

At the end of the “Jesuitical” podcast the three co-hosts, all associate editors at “America” magazine, share a personal reflection in a segment entitled “*Consolations and Desolations.*” The following desolation was offered by Olga Segura.

1. Olga was looking forward to the coming holiday season with Enoch, her boyfriend. She envisioned that he would be welcomed into her family and she would be welcomed into his and, being the extrovert that she is, she would bring them all together. But only half of that happened. Olga’s family was very welcoming to Enoch, but his family did not reciprocate. This was a surprise and hurtful and impacted her enjoyment of the season.
2. Says Olga, “I didn’t think I would be faced with rejection...in this relationship at all. Trying to navigate being in a healthy relationship with this sense of rejection that I am feeling has been really, really difficult for me and the desolation has been that I have been really, really angry at God throughout the entire holiday season. We were supposed to go to midnight Mass, we didn’t do that. I didn’t really spend time with my family or in prayer because I was just so angry at the entire situation because I just... [she pauses]. Not being welcomed is so hurtful and I was just, ‘God, why would you have allowed this to happen to me?’ So, it’s been very, very difficult for me to kind of process all of that and it has been very, very hard.”

Questions to Consider:

1. What is happening to Olga?
2. What are her feelings in regard to her life situation?
3. Olga is aware that she is experiencing desolation. What are some of the interior experiences that accompany this movement?
4. What tactic do the Rules suggest that Olga might employ here?
5. How are some ways that Olga might counterattack?
6. What comfort might Rules 7 and 8 give Olga?

CLOSING PRAYER: TEACH ME TO LISTEN^{xii}

Teach me to listen, O God, to those nearest me, my family, my friends, my co-workers.

Help me to be aware that no matter what words I hear, the message is, “Accept the person I am. Listen to me.”

Teach me to listen, my caring God, to those far from me – the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

Teach me to listen, O God my Mother, to myself. Help me to be less afraid to trust the voice inside – in the deepest part of me.

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice – in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence.

Teach me, Lord, to listen.

Amen.

Week 2 assignment

Prayer during the week

In our prayer this week we examine how the spirits are working within us as we examine our experience of desolation and observe how God is present in all things. Continue to journal about your experience.

1. Pray the Examen of Consciousness daily.

The Examen is meant to be a short (10-15-minute) review of the day. See pages 63-66 in *What's Your Decision?* for tips on praying the Examen.

- As you review your day, consider not just your actions but also your thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Make a few notes as this can help you identify patterns.
- Each day as you reflect on your Examen, note in your journal at least 3 things for which you are grateful. Even better, challenge yourself to find 5 things for which you are grateful.
- *At least once during the week*, pray the Examen entitled “*Surprise*” (page 57) in *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen* and briefly journal about your experience.

2. Read Rule 9 (pages 77-78) in *What's Your Decision?* and the article entitled “Resistance as a Cause of Desolation” on the next page of this Guide.

Answer the questions at the end.

3. Read chapters 4 and 5 (43-66) in *What's Your Decision?* and respond to the questions on page # in the Participant Guide.

Note any insights or questions in your journal. Optional: Read more about rules 5-11 on pages 72-80 in *What's Your Decision?*

6. In your prayer time immediately before our next meeting, review the notes you made on a personal experience(s) with desolation and any other notes in your journal.

What stands out? What is happening in your inner experience? Are you seeing any patterns? Any surprises or new insights? Any questions?



Resistance as a Cause of Desolation

Adapted from "Orientations" by John Veltri, S. J. ^{xiii}

In Rule 9, Ignatius identifies three reasons for Desolation.

The three explicit reasons are summarized as follows:

1. *Through one's own fault, Consolation has been taken away.*
2. *God allows the distressful experience to help one become more spiritually mature.*
3. *God wants one to realize deeply that Consolation is a free gift from God.*

The second reason is not to be interpreted that God enjoys putting us to the test. The "testing" or "trying" to which Ignatius refers is more like that of the biblical image of "purifying gold in a fire." It is not for God's pleasure that we are tested through Desolation; but for our own sake because God loves us. Although this testing, which is allowed by God, is experienced negatively, it has a very positive thrust in that it has a maturing effect on us. Desolation forces us to question the selflessness of our love. Do I love God simply because I have enjoyed interior movements that have inflamed my heart with love? Or can I persevere in loving God even in Desolation.

The third reason that Ignatius gives, and is the one most commonly experienced when doing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, is to impress upon us our desire to control God and thus our experience of Consolation and Desolation.

Inordinate Attachments

Implied in these reasons is that Desolation comes when one is dominated by an inordinate attachment. This is a common reason for Desolation in our daily living, outside the Exercises journey. Vinita Hampton Wright, a spiritual director who leads groups through the Exercises and frequently writes on Ignatian spirituality, suggests that we can discover our attachments by looking at our fears.^{xiv} We generally fear losing what we are attached to the most. Money is a common attachment in our culture. Other examples of attachment are fame, reputation, professional success, job titles, sexual gratification and well-being. As you can see, some of these common attachments such as money, which is required for survival, are quite challenging.

When an inordinate attachment is at play, the response may be to neglect our spiritual life. This may be a response to the fact that the less-than-conscious self is not ready to allow the attachment to be put in order. We will probably never be completely free of attachments in this life; however, an awareness of them is the first step in freeing us from their power.

Resistance

Desolation is itself a form of resistance. Resistance is another way of expressing our reluctance to deal with inordinate attachments and is implied in all three of Ignatius' reasons. A fact of human behavior is that we often resist at a point of growth. This is especially relevant for individuals moving towards God (Rule 2).

Some ways resistance might manifest are boredom ("This is sooo uninteresting..."), an inability to grasp significance or meaning ("This is too complicated for me..."), blaming ("Who is the idiot that thought this up?"), avoidance behavior ("I'm just too busy...") — all which add up a lack of action.

Fear of change is a frequent cause of resistance. And since as humans we are adept at many strategies for avoiding bad feelings, we may not even be aware that fear is a factor. The root cause of the fear is often a concern about possible implications of the change—fear of the unknown, fear of losing control over some aspect of our lives, fear that we do not have the skills, knowledge or ability to deal with the change, or fear that we will be held to a higher standard in the call to "radical discipleship."

Parker Palmer

Parker Palmer is a Quaker elder, educator, activist, and author. In his book “Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation,” he tells the story of his own search for vocation and how his attachments resulted in his making career choices that while honorable, were not in alignment with his deepest desires. In the end, he experienced burnout and ultimately depression.^{xv}

One incident was particularly enlightening for him, revealing truths about his own ego and attachment to societal markers of success. He was dean of a Quaker retreat center when he was offered the opportunity to become the president of a small educational institution.

“I was certain this was the job for me,” he said.

Following custom in the Quaker community, Parker Palmer called on half a dozen trusted friends to help him discern his vocation by means of a “clearness committee,” a process in which the group refrains from giving advice but spends three hours asking honest, open questions to help the person discerning discover their own inner truth.

“Looking back, of course, it is clear that my real intent in convening this group was not to discern anything but to brag about being offered a job I had already decided to accept!”

For a while, the questions were easy: What is your vision for this institution? What is its mission in the larger society? But halfway through the process, someone asked a question that sounded easier yet

turned out to be very hard: What would you like most about being a president?”

He pondered the question for a full minute before responding and then gave a litany of all the things he would not like about the job such as having to give up writing and teaching, his dislike of the politics of the presidency, and having to be falsely nice to people for the sake of fund raising.

Twice the questioner reminded him of the original question and restated it. Finally, Palmer said, in his smallest voice, “I guess what I’d like most is getting my picture in the paper with the word president under it.”

No one laughed. After a long and uncomfortable silence his questioner asked: “Parker, can you think of an easier way to get your picture in the paper?”

Journal your response to the following questions:

1. What attachments are most relevant for you?
2. Consider one or two examples of personal desolation. What do you think was the reason for your desolation?
3. Do you see any patterns in your experiences of desolation?
4. Where have you experienced resistance at the point of growth? How did that resistance manifest?



What's Your Decision? Reflection Questions

Focus on your prayer, relationships or daily activities — including what you are reading and learning. God speaks to us in all experience and reveals to us who God is and how God is acting in our midst. Reflection is different from “thinking about it” or “processing it.” Faith leads us to look at our unfolding experience from the perspective of God’s presence and action. The questions that follow on each of the *What's Your Decision?* chapters are intended to enhance your understanding and provide consideration for further prayer.

Write responses in your journal.

Chapter 4 – *The One Thing Necessary (And a Few Other Things That Are Very Helpful)*

1. How do you understand the statement on page 44 that we “...so often make an end of our means”? In what ways have you made an end of your means?
2. In what ways can our talents help us to “praise, reverence and serve God”?
3. In the description of the three men who have acquired a fortune (page 53-54), what challenges you most? What gets in the way of your own spiritual freedom?

Chapter 5 – *Making Sense of Inner Spiritual Movements*

1. The authors say that one dimension of our spiritual experience is the inner conflict between good and evil (pages 57-58). What examples of this conflict have you experienced either now or in the past?
2. What social or cultural influences (pages 58-60) are challenges for you either now or in the past?
3. Referring to the description of consolation and desolation on pages 61-62, what examples can you identify from your own experience?
4. How is practicing the Examen helpful in making good decisions?

Week 3

Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 John 4:1

OPENING PRAYER

**All: Come Holy Spirit
Fill the hearts of your faithful
And enkindle in them the fire of your love**

Presider: God of heaven and earth,
Creating God and Sustainer of Life,
We give you praise

**All: You have made us in Your image,
And call us to be Your likeness of love
and truth,
We give You praise.**

Presider: Son of God, Sun of Justice,
Light, Life and Source of Hope,
We give you praise

**All: You are the Incarnate God, Jesus,
Who died that we might live forever,
We give you praise.**

Presider: Holy Spirit, our Advocate,
Spirit of Fire that dwells within our hearts,
We give you praise.

All: You who guide us on our journey of faith,
We give you praise.

PSALM 139

Alternate sides

Yahweh, you search me and you know me.
You know when I am standing or sitting.
You perceive my thoughts from far away.

Whether I walk or lie down, you are watching;
You are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is even on my tongue, Yahweh,
You know it completely

Close behind and in front, you hem me in,
Shielding me with your hand.
Such knowledge is beyond my understanding,
Too high beyond my reach,

If I climb to the heavens, you are there;
There, too, if I sink to Sheol.
If I flew to the point of sunrise-
Or far across the sea-
Your hand would still be guiding me,
Your right hand holding me.

All:

You created my inmost being
And knit me in my mother's womb.
For all these mysteries-
For the wonder of myself,
For the wonder of your works—
I thank you.



Everyday Discernment

Inviting God into your Decisions

Agenda - Week 3

In today's session we will:

- Listen to and share insights from this week's prayer in Holy Listening
- Explore three images of how the evil spirit works (Rules 12-14)
- Consider some of the weak spots in our defense against the evil spirit
- Review the prayer assignment for the coming week

Holy Listening

Holy Listening is a way of listening to one another for the movement of God. It is an exercise in listening deeply. We listen to what is being said, to what is not said and for how the Holy Spirit is moving us as we listen. So how do we accomplish this? We listen without comment; we observe silence and let the Spirit speak to us. In Holy Listening:

- Each person in the circle has an opportunity to respond to the given question or topic. The circle moves in a clockwise fashion.
- Holy listening is our willingness and intention to be present, open, reverent, nonjudgmental, and compassionate. Our job as listeners is to note how the Spirit is moving primarily in ourselves. Listeners may wish to take brief notes. Note anything that the Spirit stirs up in you such as a(n):
 - o image
 - o pattern
 - o insight
 - o scripture
- When the circle is completed listeners offer any insights starting with the person to the right of the first person who spoke
- Use "I" language. For example: "I noticed your voice change as you shared..." "I felt your deep distress...." "I had the image of a stormy sky..." "I was reminded of the scripture of the woman at the well..."
- Focus on how the Spirit moved in you.
- Avoid giving advice or problem solving.

Holy Listening Focus Question

This past week you were asked to contemplate your experience with desolation. What experience, awareness, understanding or feeling did you have in your prayer this week?

Shoring Up Our Weakest Defenses

In Rules 12-14, St. Ignatius shifts away from the experiences of spiritual desolation and into the ways the enemy tempts us. Spiritual desolation and the enemy's temptations often go together (same enemy with same goal in mind). Temptations can also come out of times of desolation. In each of these 3 rules, St. Ignatius uses a metaphor that describes how the enemy will attempt to deceive us.

3 Ways the Evil Spirit Works

Rule	Metaphor	Represents	Defense
Rule 12	Woman fighting a man; Spoiled child interacting with parents	Temptations	Stand firm from the beginning
Rule 13	False Lover	Deceits	Break the spiritual silence
Rule 14	Thief	Attacks	Strengthen the weak point(s)

See the Appendix for the full text of *The Rules for Discernment of Spirits*.

Jon (from "What's Your Decision?" pages 12-13, 67, 78)

1. Jon was bored at his job as an information technology engineer for a real estate company. He wanted to do something that served people's needs more directly. His friends encouraged him to make a change, as did his pastor and a couple of people he thought had spiritual insight.

He considered several options: going to graduate school for a degree in social work, living off his savings for a year while he did volunteer work, took some courses and considered his future; or joining a friend in a new company that helped nonprofit agencies with their fund-raising and business operations.

2. Jon did none of these things. He decided to travel and taste some adventure while he was still young and single so he went to Uganda to help a small nongovernmental organization set up and operate AIDS clinics. It was a disastrous experience. The job was enormously stressful. He was unprepared for African culture. He was disheartened by Ugandan poverty and the vast

scope of the AIDS crisis. He fell ill with an intestinal ailment that didn't go away. Six months into the job—lonely, sick and depressed—he quit and came home. He wanted to find out what went wrong and what he should do next. (p. 12-13)

3. Jon realizes that his decision to work with a non-profit in Africa was foolish and impulsive. Back in the United States, he is confused and depressed about his next step. He doesn't trust his own thinking. In fact, he thinks there might be something wrong with his mind. (p. 67)

4. Jon, mired in desolation after his disastrous sojourn in Africa, decided to combat his sadness by praying more and practicing patience. But he also carefully examined the cause of his gloomy state. He realized that his decision to go to Africa was impulsive and mistaken. He asked God to show him why he had acted impulsively. This led Jon into a fruitful assessment of his character defects and his strengths. (p. 78)

Questions to Consider:

Consider the following questions in the cases of Jon (previous page), Louise (Participant Guide, page 3), Olga (Participant Guide, page 12):

1. What weak points is the enemy exploiting?

- Jon
- Louise
- Olga

2. How might they counterattack?

- Jon
- Louise
- Olga

CLOSING PRAYER: TEACH ME TO LISTEN^{xvi}

Teach me to listen, O God, to those nearest me, my family, my friends, my co-workers.

Help me to be aware that no matter what words I hear, the message is, “Accept the person I am. Listen to me.”

Teach me to listen, my caring God, to those far from me – the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

Teach me to listen, O God my Mother, to myself. Help me to be less afraid to trust the voice inside – in the deepest part of me.

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice – in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence.

Teach me, Lord, to listen.

Amen.

Week 3 assignment

Prayer during the week

In our prayer this week we consider where we may be vulnerable to the evil spirit. Continue to journal about your experience.

1. Pray the Examen of Consciousness daily.

The Examen is meant to be a short (10-15-minute) review of the day. See pages 63-66 in *What's Your Decision?* for tips on praying the Examen.

- As you review the day, consider not just your actions but also your thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Make a few notes as this can help you identify patterns.
- Each day as you reflect on your Examen, note in your journal at least 3 things for which you are grateful. Even better, challenge yourself to find 5 things for which you are grateful.
- **At least once during the week**, pray the Examen entitled "*The Hole in the Fortress Wall*" (page 76) in *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen* and briefly journal about your experience.

2. Optional: Read more about rules 12-14 on pages 80-83 in *What's Your Decision?*

3. Respond to the questions in the exercise "Weak Points in my Defense" on the next page.

4. In your prayer time immediately before our next meeting, review the notes you made on a personal experience(s) with desolation and any other notes in your journal.

- What stands out?
- What is happening in your inner experience?
- Are you seeing any patterns? Any surprises or new insights? Any questions?



Weak Points in My Defense

By now you have had many opportunities through prayer, reading and discussion, to consider where you might be vulnerable to the attacks of the evil spirit as described in Rule 14. Take the next few minutes to journal about the following questions.

It may be helpful to review your responses to the questions at the end of the essay “*Resistance as a Cause of Desolation*” (Participant Guide, page 14) and the Reflection Questions on Chapters 4 and 5 in *What’s Your Decision?* (Participant Guide, page 16).

1. Considering my own history with desolation, what areas of vulnerability has the evil spirit exploited in the past?
In what areas might I become vulnerable in the future?

2. What strategy (or strategies) have I used to overcome desolation – how did I counterattack? Was it effective?
What strategies might I employ in the future?

Week 4

And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11

OPENING PRAYER

**All: Come Holy Spirit
Fill the hearts of your faithful
And enkindle in them the fire of your love**

Presider: God of heaven and earth,
Creating God and Sustainer of Life,
We give you praise

**All: You have made us in Your image,
And call us to be Your likeness of love
and truth,
We give You praise.**

Presider: Son of God, Sun of Justice,
Light, Life and Source of Hope,
We give you praise

**All: You are the Incarnate God, Jesus,
Who died that we might live forever,
We give you praise.**

Presider: Holy Spirit, our Advocate,
Spirit of Fire that dwells within our hearts,
We give you praise.

All: You who guide us on our journey of faith,
We give you praise.

PSALM 139

Alternate sides

Yahweh, you search me and you know me.
You know when I am standing or sitting.
You perceive my thoughts from far away.

Whether I walk or lie down, you are watching;
You are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is even on my tongue, Yahweh,
You know it completely

Close behind and in front, you hem me in,
Shielding me with your hand.
Such knowledge is beyond my understanding,
Too high beyond my reach,

If I climb to the heavens, you are there;
There, too, if I sink to Sheol.
If I flew to the point of sunrise-
Or far across the sea-
Your hand would still be guiding me,
Your right hand holding me.

All:

You created my inmost being
And knit me in my mother's womb.
For all these mysteries-
For the wonder of myself,
For the wonder of your works—
I thank you.



Everyday Discernment

Inviting God into your Decisions

Agenda - Week 4

In today's session we will:

- Listen to and share insights from this week's prayer in Holy Listening
- Continue our exploration of Ignatius' Rules for Subtle Discernment
- Review the prayer assignment for the coming week

Holy Listening

Holy Listening is a way of listening to one another for the movement of God. It is an exercise in listening deeply. We listen to what is being said, to what is not said and for how the Holy Spirit is moving us as we listen. So how do we accomplish this? We listen without comment; we observe silence and let the Spirit speak to us. In Holy Listening:

- Each person in the circle has an opportunity to respond to the given question or topic. The circle moves in a clockwise fashion.
- Holy listening is our willingness and intention to be present, open, reverent, nonjudgmental, and compassionate. Our job as listeners is to note how the Spirit is moving primarily in ourselves. Listeners may wish to take brief notes. Note anything that the Spirit stirs up in you such as a(n):
 - o image
 - o pattern
 - o insight
 - o scripture
- When the circle is completed listeners offer any insights starting with the person to the right of the first person who spoke
- Use "I" language. For example: "I noticed your voice change as you shared..." "I felt your deep distress...." "I had the image of a stormy sky..." "I was reminded of the scripture of the woman at the well..."
- Focus on how the Spirit moved in you.
- Avoid giving advice or problem solving.

Holy Listening Focus Question

This past week you prayed the Examen daily and considered where you saw God. In one Examen you reflected on your areas of vulnerability to the evil spirit.

What experience, awareness, understanding or feeling did you have in your prayer this week?

The False Spirit as an Angel of Light

Rule 4 of the rules for subtle discernment warns that for someone seeking the good, the evil spirit usually appears as an angel of light. Some examples of how the false spirit might appear as an angel of light are:^{xvii}

- A young woman enters the convent not because she feels called to it but because she thinks it is a holier life, a more perfect life, than motherhood.
- A mother is overly harsh as she pushes her son to make good grades.
- A father smothers his daughter with attention and gifts, and she never grows up.
- A middle-aged man abandons his family because he has fallen in love with a woman who “really understands me for who I am.”
- The friend of an alcoholic becomes obsessed with “fixing” him.
- A young Catholic college student fails to turn in an important paper because she has spent all her time prepping for the next Catholic Center retreat.

The good Christian might be in false consolation when attracted to something holy that happens to be:

- The wrong mission for this particular person
- The right mission but the wrong timing
- The right mission but with the wrong method, emphasis, or degree of involvement

Case 4 - Paul: ^{xviii}

1. Paul is a hard-working man in his mid-thirties. He is married to Sheila and they have three children whose ages range from three to eleven. The family are regular church-goers, but they have had little regular contact with the church beyond that. About a year ago, however, Paul was invited to join a parish prayer group.

2. At one of the meetings he had an experience in which he believed God was calling him to give himself more generously in his Christian

commitment. Since then he has been spending more and more time working in the parish and with the local handicapped children’s group.

3. This has put a great strain on his family life. After several fierce arguments, Sheila threatens to leave him if he does not give up the prayer group and his other commitments. He gives them up but becomes discouraged and disillusioned with anything to do with religion.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is happening to Paul?
2. What are his feelings regarding his life situation?
3. Is he experiencing spiritual consolation or desolation? Why?
4. What are some of the interior experiences that accompany this movement?

CLOSING PRAYER: TEACH ME TO LISTEN^{xix}

Teach me to listen, O God, to those nearest me, my family, my friends, my co-workers.

Help me to be aware that no matter what words I hear, the message is, "Accept the person I am. Listen to me."

Teach me to listen, my caring God, to those far from me – the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

Teach me to listen, O God my Mother, to myself. Help me to be less afraid to trust the voice inside – in the deepest part of me.

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice – in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence.

Teach me, Lord, to listen.

Amen.

Week 4 assignment

Prayer during the week

In our prayer this week we consider the subtle action of the bad spirit, further explore our areas of vulnerability and identify a future decision. Continue to journal about your experience.

1. Pray the Examen of Consciousness daily.

The Examen is meant to be a short (10-15-minute) review of the day. See pages 63-66 in *What's Your Decision?* for tips on praying the Examen.

- As you review the day, consider not just your actions but also your thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Make a few notes as this can help you identify patterns.
- Each day as you reflect on your Examen, note in your journal at least 3 things for which you are grateful. Even better, challenge yourself to find 5 things for which you are grateful.
- **At least once during the week**, pray the Examen entitled “*Saving F.A.C.E.*” (page 29-31) in *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen* and briefly journal about your experience.

2. Go back in your prayer and ask God to point out how you may have experienced consolation without previous cause, false consolation, the false spirit and/or decisions made in the afterglow of a consolation from God.

(See “Rules for Subtle Discernment,” Rules 1-4 and 8, in *What's Your Decision?* (pages 85-96). Journal about your insights.

3. Read “Two Important Ideas from the Second Set of Rules” (pages 95-96) “Five Pillars for Sound Decision Making” (97-107) in *What's Your Decision?* and respond to the questions on the next page of this Guide.

4. Journal your response to “A Future Discernment, Part 1” on the next page of this Guide.

5. In your prayer time immediately before our next meeting, review the notes you made on a personal experience(s) with desolation and any other notes in your journal.

- What stands out?
- What is happening in your inner experience?
- Are you seeing any patterns? Any surprises or new insights? Any questions?



What's Your Decision? Reflection Questions

Chapter 7 – Two Important Ideas from the Second Set of Rules

1. The authors list several subtle ways that the evil spirit might work in our lives (i.e., we become distracted, worry, act too soon, see ourselves as “God’s gift” and do too much, etc.). To which of those are you most vulnerable?

Chapter 8 – Five Pillars for Sound Decision Making

2. What is the key question to be constantly asked in decision making? How does the image of a spiral relate to this question? How do you respond to this image?
3. What is the relationship of desolation to decision making? Why is decision making while in desolation problematic?
4. How do you feel about the statement, “Decision making is not meant to be a solitary activity...” (page 103)?
5. The imagination can be a tool for sound decision making. Which of the imaginative approaches outlined by the authors appeal to you? (pages 103-107)

A Future Discernment, Part 1

Adapted from “Reimagining the Ignatian Examen”^{xx}

Instructions:

In our next meeting we will be discussing three modes of decision making. To make the most of this discussion, bring one or more pending decisions to consider. This decision should be one in which you are choosing between two or more equally good options, not between good and bad. Prayerfully respond to the following prompt and journal your response.

I ask God to reveal to me a decision that I need to make. It could be a small decision I’ll be making shortly — for example, how to handle a tricky situation; whether to say yes or no to an invitation; or what to say to someone asking my advice. Or it could be a big decision that is more long term: a career choice, initiating a significant change in a relationship; making an important commitment. I ask God to lay out the options before me.

Week 5

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace. James 3:17-18

OPENING PRAYER

**All: Come Holy Spirit
Fill the hearts of your faithful
And enkindle in them the fire of your love**

Presider: God of heaven and earth,
Creating God and Sustainer of Life,
We give you praise

**All: You have made us in Your image,
And call us to be Your likeness of love
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All: You who guide us on our journey of faith,
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You know when I am standing or sitting.
You perceive my thoughts from far away.

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You are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is even on my tongue, Yahweh,
You know it completely

Close behind and in front, you hem me in,
Shielding me with your hand.
Such knowledge is beyond my understanding,
Too high beyond my reach,

If I climb to the heavens, you are there;
There, too, if I sink to Sheol.
If I flew to the point of sunrise-
Or far across the sea-
Your hand would still be guiding me,
Your right hand holding me.

All:

You created my inmost being
And knit me in my mother's womb.
For all these mysteries-
For the wonder of myself,
For the wonder of your works—
I thank you.



Everyday Discernment

Inviting God into your Decisions

Agenda - Week 5

In today's session we will:

- Listen to and share insights from this week's prayer in Holy Listening
- Explore three modes of decision making
- Review the prayer assignment for the coming week

Holy Listening

Holy Listening is a way of listening to one another for the movement of God. It is an exercise in listening deeply. We listen to what is being said, to what is not said and for how the Holy Spirit is moving us as we listen. So how do we accomplish this? We listen without comment; we observe silence and let the Spirit speak to us. In Holy Listening:

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- When the circle is completed listeners offer any insights starting with the person to the right of the first person who spoke
- Use "I" language. For example: "I noticed your voice change as you shared..." "I felt your deep distress...." "I had the image of a stormy sky..." "I was reminded of the scripture of the woman at the well..."
- Focus on how the Spirit moved in you.
- Avoid giving advice or problem solving.

Holy Listening Focus Question

This past week you prayed the Examen daily and considered where you saw God. In one Examen you reflected on your fears, attachments, need for control and illusions of entitlement.

What experience, awareness, understanding or feeling did you have in your prayer this week?

Three Modes for Making a Decision

These three modes of decision making are the result of years of observation of what happens when people who love the good make decisions. They are based on keen insights into human psychology and the way God interacts with human beings. The modes do not exclude each other, nor should the approach outlined be viewed as a strict road map. Ignatian decision making seeks to bring the emotions and the intellect together whenever possible.

We apply our reason and knowledge to decisions, but we also listen to what our feelings say. Sometimes feelings take center stage, and sometimes they wait in the wings until the head has done the heavy work. Ignatius believed that we can accurately discern God’s will when we get in touch with our deepest desires. This is the heart—the place where our emotions, thoughts, and feelings come together:^{xxi}

Mode	Approach
<p>Mode 1: Certain conviction that leaves little room for doubt. Well known examples are the call of St. Matthew & St. Paul.</p> <p>God’s presence is overt & direct</p> <p>Mostly involves the will — that part of our personality able to act on the decisions the mind makes</p>	<p>Start by praying:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For the light to make the right decision 2. To know God’s will 3. To be open to options available <p>Reminder: Knowing the right decision is not the same as acting on it</p>
<p>Mode 2: Feelings are unsettled. Emphasizes interpretation of states of consolation and desolation and relies heavily on discernment of spirits. Ignatius considered this most common for individuals making a significant decision.</p> <p>God’s presence is somewhat more hidden</p> <p>Mostly involves the emotions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start by praying for the knowledge of God’s will. 2. Pray for freedom – the grace to do what God wants you to do. 3. Notice movements of consolation & desolation. 4. Imagine yourself having made the decision. 5. Try the other option. 6. Discern the source & direction of your feelings. 7. What does this mean for your decision? 8. Discuss with someone. 9. Decide and seek confirmation of the decision. <p>Reminder: Spiritual consolation & desolation are not the same as feeling good or bad. They are deeper feelings that affect our relationship with God leading to a deeper sense of rightness & wrongness. Spiritual consolation is the sense that certain actions will bring us closer to God & help us more fully realize what we truly desire and a sense of “coming home.” Spiritual desolation is a sense that we are getting away from who we truly are.</p>

Mode**Approach**

Mode 3: Feelings are calm. Emphasizes our intellectual faculties, especially reasoning and imagination. Useful for complex decisions when weighing multiple factors. Use for major commitments not undertaken lightly and not easily reversed such as career, marriage, education, jobs, service work, etc. when the answer is not clear.

God's presence is further in the background

Mostly involves reasoning

Avoid making a decision solely in Mode 3; always go back to Mode 2 to determine the emotions or affections.

1. Identify the decision to be made
 - The issue should be practical and real.
 - The decision should be one that you have the right to make
 - You must have the information to make an intelligent decision
2. State the choice concretely.
3. Pray for inner freedom.
4. Gather all necessary information.
5. Pray for inner freedom, again.
6. Make a list of advantages & disadvantages:
 - Which reasons seem to be the most important?
 - What core values emerge?
 - Which core values seem more consistent with your true self?
7. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages.
8. Test your reasoning with your imagination.
9. Make a tentative decision.
10. Confirm the decision.
11. Make the decision even if not sure about it.

Read the case of Ronan Farrow on the next page and answer the questions below.

Questions to Consider:

1. What evidence do we have that this was a second mode decision?
2. Without using the term, what advice does Farrow give the graduates about exercising “spiritual freedom” in decision making.
3. On page 119 of *What's Your Decision?* The authors tell us that spiritual consolation leads to a “deep sense of rightness” and that “certain actions will...help us more fully realize what we truly desire” while spiritual desolation is a “sense that we are getting away from who we truly are... a course of action seems unwise, uncomfortable...not me.” How do you see consolation and desolation at work in Farrow's decision to continue his pursuit of the story?

The Case of Ronan Farrow

In May 2018 Ronan Farrow, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, gave the commencement speech at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Farrow was awarded the Pulitzer, which he shared with the New York Times, for his dogged pursuit of the story detailing allegations of sexual misconduct by film producer Harvey Weinstein.

Case 5 - Ronan Farrow^{xxii}

1. Farrow acknowledged his glowing introduction at the event and how easy and neat it all sounded after the work was done and success achieved. However, things did not always look so positive as he pursued the story. He tells of difficulties faced and how he learned to trust his inner voice.
2. He started tracking the story as a journalist for NBC but left, later saying he did not have institutional support to continue. The network did not support his pursuit of the allegations and his contract, which was ending, was not going to be renewed because he refused to stop his investigation. Another news outlet was racing to scoop him on the story and he was in danger of not being able to report on something he had been working on for a year.
3. Further, he was troubled that he was letting down the women who had put their trust in him with their experiences. In addition, his book publisher dropped him and refused to look at a manuscript he had been working on for years.
4. He moved out of his house because he was being followed and threatened and was facing personal legal threats from the powerful and wealthy Weinstein who said he would use the best lawyers in the country to wipe him out and destroy his future.
5. Even if he found a way to publish the story, he had no way of knowing if anyone would care. The executives at NBC had been telling him for months that he did not have a story and he was doubtful that he would even have a job in journalism ever again. Even his family members were advising him to drop it.
6. His commencement speech to the graduating undergraduates, addressed the difficulties he faced when pursuing the story about Weinstein and how he learned to trust his inner voice telling him to proceed.
7. “We are surrounded by a culture,” he told the graduates, “that tells us to take the easy way out. That tries to tip the scales in favor of getting paid rather than protesting. That tells us to kill the story instead of poking the bear. A culture that tells us not to trust that voice that says to fight.
8. “A culture that tells us not to trust that voice that says to fight.
9. “And the reason the culture sends us that message is that we look around and we see people taking the easy way out — doing the immoral thing, or the selfish thing — and being rewarded. And it’s easy to conclude that’s just the way the world works.
10. “So here’s what I would say to you. No matter what you choose to do; no matter what direction you go; whether you’re a doctor treating refugees or a financier making money off foreclosures...
11. “And I genuinely hope you don’t do that ...
“... You will face a moment in your career where you have absolutely no idea what to do. Where it will be totally unclear to you what the right thing is for you, for your family, for your community.
12. “And I hope that in that moment you’ll be generous with yourself, but trust that inner voice. Because more than ever we need people to be guided by their own senses of principle — and not the whims of a culture that prizes ambition, and sensationalism, and celebrity, and vulgarity, and doing whatever it takes to win.”

CLOSING PRAYER: TEACH ME TO LISTEN^{xvi}

Teach me to listen, O God, to those nearest me, my family, my friends, my co-workers.

Help me to be aware that no matter what words I hear, the message is, "Accept the person I am. Listen to me."

Teach me to listen, my caring God, to those far from me – the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

Teach me to listen, O God my Mother, to myself. Help me to be less afraid to trust the voice inside – in the deepest part of me.

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice – in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence.

Teach me, Lord, to listen.

Amen.

Week 5 assignment

Prayer during the week

In our prayer this week we name the spiritual gifts or virtues that we most need, and we examine a future decision. Continue to journal about your experience. .

1. Pray the Examen of Consciousness daily.

The Examen is meant to be a short (10-15-minute) review of the day. See pages 63-66 in *What's Your Decision?* for tips on praying the Examen.

- As you review the day, consider not just your actions but also your thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Make a few notes as this can help you identify patterns.
- Each day as you reflect on your Examen, note in your journal at least 3 things for which you are grateful. Even better, challenge yourself to find 5 things for which you are grateful.
- **At least once during the week**, pray the Examen entitled “*Naming the Grace*” (page 8) in *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen* and briefly journal about your experience.

2. Complete “A Future Decision, Part 2” on the next page.

3. Read Chapter 12, “Signs of a Good Decision,” “A Final Word,” and “Handy Reference: How the Rules of Discernment Help Us Make Good Decisions” (pages 141-157) and respond to the Reflection Questions in the Participant Guide (page 37).

4. Complete “My Everyday Discernment Experience” worksheet on page 38.

5. In your prayer time immediately before our next meeting, review the notes you made on a personal experience(s) with desolation and any other notes in your journal.

- What stands out?
- What is happening in your inner experience?
- Are you seeing any patterns? Any surprises or new insights? Any questions?

A Future Discernment, Part 2

Adapted from "Reimagining the Ignatian Examen"

Grace: *For this discernment, I ask to be guided by the Holy Spirit, to know God's will and the freedom to do what God wants of me.*

Instructions:

Be prepared to share one of your future decisions as if it were a case. In your journal, respond to the following prompts to help develop your case. You should be able to describe your future decision in 2-3 minutes. Keep in mind that this decision should be between two or more good options, not between a good and a bad option.

1. Briefly state the circumstances of the future decision.

2. Clearly state the options in an X/not X or an X or Y type format.

3. What are your emotions regarding this decision? Do you have an initial inclination toward one of the options?

4. Is this a Mode 1, 2 or 3 decision? How do you know?

5. For each option consider the following.

See page 136 of *What's Your Decision?* for an example of how to make a list for and against decision alternatives.

- Who would be affected?
- What would likely happen if I chose it?
- What other outcomes do I envision?
- What facts or research are available to me regarding the options?

6. Now for each option, consider NOT choosing it:

- Who would be affected?
- What are the likely repercussions?
- What other outcomes do I envision?
- What facts or research are available to me regarding this choice?

7. Run through the checklist "Three Modes for Making a Decision" on pages 31-32 in this Guide or review the in-depth explanation in *What's Your Decision?* (Mode 1, pages 109-114; Mode 2, pages 115-128; Mode 3, pages 129-142). Have you left anything out?

8. Did you reach a conclusion? If yes, have you experienced any type of confirmation?



What's Your Decision? Reflection Questions

Chapter 12 – Signs of a Good Decision

A Good Decision Leads to Movement

1. What are some reasons a decision might fail to lead to movement?
2. What are two ways for an individual or a group to get unstuck with implementing a decision?

A Good Decision is Made in Freedom

3. What are some strategies for overcoming attachments that appeal to you?

A Good Decision is Balanced and Involves the Whole Person

4. We all have preferred ways of taking in information about our environment and responding. The authors describe how the strength of one orientation can have a down-side that can stand in the way of good decision making. For example, the strength of being hyper aware of one's interior landscape may carry with it a weakness of being blind to the exterior world. What strengths can you rely on? What accompanying weaknesses might you need to guard against?

A Good Decision is a Spiral into Deeper Knowledge

5. The authors state that “the goal of discernment is not to get to a final destination as efficiently as possible, but to continue to go deeper and deeper into our relationship with God.” How do you respond to that objective? In what ways does that statement challenge you?

Handy Reference: How the Rules of Discernment Help Us Make Good Decisions

6. Of the twelve principles outlined in this section, which are particularly relevant or meaningful to you? Why?



My Everyday Discernment Experience

Respond to the following prompts about your experience in this workshop by identifying...

**A way that my relationship with God
has changed or grown**

**A personal understanding or insight gained
(something new, clarified, confirmed, etc.)**

**A short personal slogan, mantra or picture that
will help me remember and put into practice a key
learning, insight or experience. For example:
“Not so fast!” or “Feelings count too!”**

**An aspect of discernment that I would like to
continue to explore**

Week 6

We do not cease praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with every power, in accord with his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy. Colossians 1:9-11

OPENING PRAYER

**All: Come Holy Spirit
Fill the hearts of your faithful
And enkindle in them the fire of your love**

Presider: God of heaven and earth,
Creating God and Sustainer of Life,
We give you praise

**All: You have made us in Your image,
And call us to be Your likeness of love
and truth,
We give You praise.**

Presider: Son of God, Sun of Justice,
Light, Life and Source of Hope,
We give you praise

**All: You are the Incarnate God, Jesus,
Who died that we might live forever,
We give you praise.**

Presider: Holy Spirit, our Advocate,
Spirit of Fire that dwells within our hearts,
We give you praise.

All: You who guide us on our journey of faith,
We give you praise.

PSALM 139

Alternate sides

Yahweh, you search me and you know me.
You know when I am standing or sitting.
You perceive my thoughts from far away.

Whether I walk or lie down, you are watching;
You are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is even on my tongue, Yahweh,
You know it completely

Close behind and in front, you hem me in,
Shielding me with your hand.
Such knowledge is beyond my understanding,
Too high beyond my reach,

If I climb to the heavens, you are there;
There, too, if I sink to Sheol.
If I flew to the point of sunrise-
Or far across the sea-
Your hand would still be guiding me,
Your right hand holding me.

All:
You created my inmost being
And knit me in my mother's womb.
For all these mysteries-
For the wonder of myself,
For the wonder of your works—
I thank you.



Everyday Discernment

Inviting God into your Decisions

Agenda - Week 6

In today's session we will:

- Share our discernment cases in Holy Listening.
- Reflect on how each of us has grown in our understanding of and approach to discernment over the past few weeks

Holy Listening

Holy Listening is a way of listening to one another for the movement of God. It is an exercise in listening deeply. We listen to what is being said, to what is not said and for how the Holy Spirit is moving us as we listen. So how do we accomplish this? We listen without comment; we observe silence and let the Spirit speak to us. In Holy Listening:

- Each person in the circle has an opportunity to respond to the given question or topic. The circle moves in a clockwise fashion.
- Holy listening is our willingness and intention to be present, open, reverent, nonjudgmental, and compassionate. Our job as listeners is to note how the Spirit is moving primarily in ourselves. Listeners may wish to take brief notes. Note anything that the Spirit stirs up in you such as a(n):
 - o image
 - o pattern
 - o insight
 - o scripture
- When the circle is completed listeners offer any insights starting with the person to the right of the first person who spoke
- Use "I" language. For example: "I noticed your voice change as you shared..." "I felt your deep distress...." "I had the image of a stormy sky..." "I was reminded of the scripture of the woman at the well..."
- Focus on how the Spirit moved in you.
- Avoid giving advice or problem solving.

Holy Listening Focus Question

This past week we prayed on a future decision.

What experience, awareness, understanding or feeling did you have regarding your discernment this week? Use the "Future Decisions" worksheet as needed to guide your sharing.

Closing Prayer:

The *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius were written over a couple of decades in the mid-sixteenth century and have been used by hundreds of thousands in the centuries since. They are essentially the structure of a personal retreat dedicated to discernment of God's will in one's life.

One of its last elements is this prayer called the *Suscipe* which is Latin for "take."

If we're wondering what to do with our lives, or even with the next fifteen minutes, the *Suscipe* is a wonderful prayer to fall back on. When it comes to decision making, context is everything, and this is a prayer that instantly puts our decision making into the right context, even when our own words fail us, when our own desires are pulling us in a million directions, and the sawdust is starting to look mighty appealing.^{xxiii}

TAKE, LORD, AND RECEIVE

by St. Ignatius of Loyola

Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory,
my understanding, and my entire will,
all that I have and possess.

Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O lord, I return it.

All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will.

Give me Thy love and thy grace,
for this is sufficient for me.

Amen.

Appendix

Rules for the Discernment of Spirits^{xxiv}

Ignatius Loyola summarized his approach to discernment of spirits in two sets of Rules for Discernment, which he included in the Spiritual Exercises. The rules deal with ways to interpret the states of consolation (joy, peace, gratitude, and the like) and desolation (depression, anxiety, fear) that people typically experience in the course of cultivating a spiritual life.

The first set is 14 rules (Spiritual Exercises, 313-327) that give practical spiritual advice about dealing with desolation—those times when the heart feels far from God and spiritual vigor wanes. They are intended to be used by an experienced spiritual director who is helping people understand the nature and meaning of the emotions they are experiencing in prayer. They are especially intended for people embarking on a serious spiritual life. They assist people in identifying the spiritual forces involved in these emotions: the Good Spirit (God, the Holy Spirit) and what Ignatius called “the enemy of our human nature” (the world, the flesh, the devil).

The second set is eight rules (Spiritual Exercises, 328–336) intended to help people who are firmly established in a spiritual life. These rules focus on spiritual consolation. They help people discern when the spiritual consolation they are feeling is an authentic sign of God’s presence. The second set of rules is especially helpful in decision making for persons who are intent on making the right choice when both (or multiple) options seem equally good.

Note: For a contemporary explanation of the Rules see chapters 6 and 7 in the book *What’s Your Decision?*

Two General Statements

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

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.

For people who want to change their lives and do good

Rule 3

Spiritual Consolation. 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

Spiritual Desolation. 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 want of faith, want of hope, want 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.

Four guidelines for dealing with spiritual desolation

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

Though in desolation we must never change our former resolutions, 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

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

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.

Three reasons we suffer desolation

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.

Two guidelines for spiritual consolation

Rule 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.

Rule 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.

Three images as to how the evil spirit works

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. It is characteristic of a woman in a quarrel with a man to lose courage and take to flight if the man shows that he is determined and fearless. However, if the man loses courage and begins to flee, the anger, vindictiveness, and rage of the woman surge up and know no bounds. In the same way, the enemy becomes weak, loses courage, and turns to flight with his seductions as soon as one leading a spiritual life faces his temptations boldly, and does exactly the opposite of what he suggests. However, if one begins to be afraid and to lose courage in temptations, no wild animal on earth can be more fierce than the enemy of our human nature. He will carry out his perverse intentions with consummate malice.

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. He is greatly displeased if his evil suggestions and depraved intentions are revealed by the daughter to her father, or by the wife to her husband. Then he readily sees he will not succeed in what he has begun. 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 deceits and malicious designs, the evil one is very much vexed. For he knows that he cannot succeed in his evil undertaking, once his evident deceits have been revealed.

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.

Second Set of Rules: Rules for Subtle Discernment**Rule 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.

It is characteristic of the evil one to fight against such happiness and consolation by proposing fallacious reasonings, subtleties, and continual deceptions.

Rule 2

God alone can give consolation to the soul without previous cause. It belongs solely to the Creator to come into a soul, to leave it, to act upon it, to draw it wholly to the love of His Divine Majesty. I said without previous cause, that is, without any preceding perception or knowledge of any subject by which a soul might be led to such a consolation through its own acts of intellect and will.

Rule 3

If a cause precedes, both the good angel and the evil spirit can give consolation to a soul, but for a quite different purpose. The good angel consoles for the progress of the soul, that it may advance and rise to what is more perfect. The evil spirit consoles for purposes that are the contrary, and that afterwards he might draw the soul to his own perverse intentions and wickedness.

Rule 4

It is a mark of the evil spirit to assume that appearance of an angel of light. He begins by suggesting thoughts that are suited to a devout soul and ends by suggesting his own. For example, he will suggest holy and pious thoughts that are wholly in conformity with the sanctity of the soul. Afterwards, he will endeavor little by little to end by drawing the soul into his hidden snares and evil designs.

Rule 5

We must carefully observe the whole course of our thoughts. If the beginning and middle and end of the course of thoughts are wholly good and directed to what is entirely right, it is a sign that they are from

the good angel. But the course of thoughts suggested to us may terminate in something evil, or distracting, or less good than the soul had formerly proposed to do. Again, it may end in what weakens the soul, or disquiets it; or by destroying the peace, tranquility, and quiet which it had before, it may cause disturbance to the soul. These things are a clear sign that the thoughts are proceeding from the evil spirit, the enemy of our progress and eternal salvation.

Rule 6

When the enemy of our human nature has been detected and recognized by the trail of evil marking his course and by the wicked end to which he leads us, it will be profitable for one who has been tempted to review immediately the whole course of the temptation. Let him consider the series of good thoughts, how they arose, how the evil one gradually attempted to make him step down from the state of spiritual delight and joy in which he was, till finally he drew him to his wicked designs. The purpose of this review is that once such an experience has been understood and carefully observed, we may guard ourselves for the future against the customary deceits of the enemy.

Rule 7

In souls that are progressing to greater perfection, the action of the good angel is delicate, gentle, delightful. It may be compared to a drop of water penetrating a sponge.

The action of the evil spirit upon such souls is violent, noisy, and disturbing. It may be compared to a drop of water falling upon a stone.

In souls that are going from bad to worse, the action of the spirits mentioned above is just the reverse. The reason for this is to be sought in the opposition or similarity of these souls to the different kinds of spirits. When the disposition is contrary to that of the spirits, they enter with noise and commotion that are easily perceived. When the disposition is similar to that of the spirits, they enter silently, as one coming into his own house when the doors are open

Rule 8

When consolation is without previous cause, as was said, there can be no deception in it, since it can proceed from God our Lord only. But a spiritual person who has received such a consolation must consider it very attentively, and must cautiously distinguish the actual time of the consolation from the period which follows it. At such a time the soul is still fervent and favored with the grace and aftereffects of the consolation which has passed. In this second period the soul frequently forms various resolutions and plans which are not granted by God our Lord. They may come from our own reasoning on the relationships of our concepts and on the consequences of our judgments, or they may come from the good or evil spirit. Hence, they must be carefully examined before they are given full approval and put into execution.

References

Week 1

ⁱ Timothy Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living* (New York, N.Y., The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2005), 3.

ⁱⁱ Jules J. Toner, S.J., *What Is Your Will O God?* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), 33-35.

ⁱⁱⁱ “St. Ignatius Loyola,” *IgnatianSpirituality*, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-voices/st-ignatius-loyola> (accessed January 20, 2018).

^{iv} Toner, *What Is Your Will*, 5-6.

Toner notes that in discernment, we focus on God’s positive will. God permits sin and its consequences, which is not necessarily positive. Positive will, St. Ignatius holds, is always what will be for His greater glory in us and for our ultimate greater happiness. Further, consider that some things happen independently of our free choice and are beyond our control. We can only know these things by prophecy or after the event has taken place. However, we do have a choice in our response – positively with loving and trusting acceptance or negatively.

Toner identifies two categories of free choice discernment:

- The discerner is trying to determine whether a proposed alternative or choice is morally permissible; or
- The discerner knows that every alternative is morally permissible but is trying to discern which one is more for the greater glory of God in us.

We focus on the last category in this workshop — concrete situations in which the discerner has a choice.

^v “Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality,” *IgnatianSpirituality*, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/discernment-of-spirits/introduction-to-discernment-of-spirits> (accessed December 9, 2017).

^{vi} “Consolation and Desolation,” *IgnatianSpirituality*, <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/discernment-of-spirits/introduction-to-discernment-of-spirits> (accessed December 9, 2017).

^{vii} Gallagher, *Discernment of Spirits*, 3.

^{viii} John Veltri, S.J., “Teach Me to Listen,” *The Value of Sparrows: Writings of a Christian Mystic*, <https://thevalueofsparrows.com/2016/06/09/prayer-teach-me-to-listen-by-john-veltri/> (accessed December 28, 2017).

^{ix} Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 17.

Week 2

^x Carol Ann Smith S.H.C.J., Eugene F. Merz S.J. *Finding God in Each Moment* (Notre Dame, Indiana, Ave Maria Press, 2006) 21.

^{xi} “Consolations and Desolations,” Jesuitical podcast episode. January 12, 2018. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/jesuitical/id1210902931?mt=2&i=1000399712719>

^{xii} Veltri, “Teach Me to Listen.”

^{xiii} John A. Veltri, S.J. *Orientations: Volume 2: Part B* (Guelph Centre of Spirituality: Guelph, Ontario), 422-4264.

^{xiv} Vinita Hampton Wright, “Free at Last,” *IgnatianSpirituality*, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/24060/free-at-last> (accessed April 30, 2018).

^{xv} Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. (San Francisco, Ca. John Wiley & Sons, 2000), 44-46.

Week 3

^{xvi} Veltri, “Teach Me to Listen.”

Week 4

^{xvii} Mark E. Thibodeaux, S.J., *God’s Voice Within* (Chicago, Illinois: Loyola Press, 2010), 41.

^{xviii} David Lonsdale, S. J. *Listening to the Music of the Spirit* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1993), 82.

^{xix} John Veltri, <https://thevalueofsparrows.com/2016/06/09/prayer-teach-me-to-listen-by-john-veltri/> (accessed December 28, 2017).

^{xx} Mark E. Thibodeaux, S.J. *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen* (Chicago, Ill: Loyola Press, 2015), 48.

^{xxi} J. Michael Sparough, S.J., Jim Manney, Tim Hipskind) *What’s Your Decision?* (Chicago, Illinois: Loyola Press, 2010), 109-110.

^{xxii} Valerie Strauss, “Ronan Farrow Who Started College at 11 Tells How He Fell Apart While Pursuing Harvey Weinstein Story,” *Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/05/08/ronan-farrow-who-started-college-at-age-11-tells-students-how-he-fell-apart-while-pursuing-harvey-weinstein-story/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c5a52cc60263

^{xxiii} Amy Welborn, *Suscipe: The Radical Prayer*, *IgnatianSpirituality.com*, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/prayers-by-st-ignatius-and-others/suscipe-the-radical-prayer>, (accessed June 13, 2018)

^{xxiv} Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (translator), *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, Loyola Press, <http://spex.ignatianspirituality.com/SpiritualExercises/Puhl#c28-1234> (accessed June 13, 2018).

