

Rule 13

Bring Things to Light

We are nearing the end of our summer series on St. Ignatius' *Rules for Discernment*. All of these columns are posted on our parish website under "Welcome; St. Ignatius."

We are in the final three rules where Ignatius focuses his attention on helping us combat and resist the enemy. In Rule 12, we learned the importance of resisting temptation *right away* or the enemy becomes fiercer causing you to become entangled in a difficult battle.

Practically, you can resist temptation by making an act of the will, "I do not want this," and asking for divine assistance, "Lord, please help me!" Let us now look at Rule 13, which is about bringing things to light.

Thirteenth Rule: *Likewise [the enemy] conducts himself as a false lover in wishing to remain secret and not be revealed. For a dissolute man who, speaking with evil intention, makes dishonorable advances to a daughter of a good father or a wife of a good husband, wishes his words and persuasions to be secret, and the contrary displeases him very much, when the daughter reveals to her father, or the wife to her husband his false words and depraved intention, because he easily perceives that he will not be able to succeed with the undertaking begun.*

In the same way, when the enemy of human nature brings his wiles and persuasions to the just soul, he wishes and desires that they be received and kept in secret; but when one reveals them to one's good confessor or to another spiritual person, who knows his deceits and malicious designs, it weighs on him very much, because he perceives that he will not be able to succeed with the malicious undertaking he has begun, since his manifest deceits have been revealed.

Ignatius' counsel in this rule is invaluable. The enemy desires to *keep things in secret* or *in the dark*. Keeping things in secret causes you to feel isolated and alone. By making you feel alone, you easily become discouraged, confused, and susceptible to doubt. In other words, the enemy remains *strong* as you keep things in secret.

Ignatius says that the enemy's power is broken when one reveals things to a good confessor or another spiritual person. He presumes that the confessor is likewise a *spiritual* person, someone who knows the tactics of the enemy. Spiritual persons could include a

trained spiritual director, spiritually experienced clergy, religious and lay people, or even a spiritual friend.

What type of things may Ignatius have in mind to bring to light? Certainly, it is those things that weigh on you, i.e., the “storms” in your soul. While far from exhaustive, examples include: a strained or broken relationship, un-confessed sins, addictions, areas of resistance to God’s grace, places of anxiety, doubts about God or yourself, etc.

When honest with ourselves, we know those things that weigh on us. They consume a fair amount of energy and inhibit us from experiencing greater freedom in Christ. Ignatius says that by bringing those things that weight on us to light, i.e., speaking about them honestly and openly, the enemy loses power *since his manifest deceits have been revealed*.

Practically: On a personal note, I have experienced the power and truth of this rule repeatedly in confession and spiritual direction. While someone begins a little squeamishly and feeling uneasy, as he or she talks about his or her struggles openly and honestly (and not feeling judged), like wind blowing in a sail, he or she comes to life. Very often the person says, “My goodness, it feels good just to talk about it!”

The enemy wants to make you feel isolated and alone in your struggles. God, however, created us *for communion*. By sharing your fears, troubles, and doubts in confession or with another spiritual person, you begin to see God and His providence, as well as yourself and your struggles, in a whole new light. In short, by bringing things to light, you not only experience greater freedom in Christ, but also new hope in His love and providential care.



Goldy enjoying the light