

Rule 2

Moving Toward God

This week we continue our summer series of St. Ignatius' *Rules of Spiritual Discernment*. We are posting these on our parish website so you can review previous rules in case you missed a bulletin.

Last week I spoke about the First Rule, which concerned those moving "from mortal sin to mortal sin," i.e., those moving away from the Lord. The evil one presents apparent pleasures to keep them in their sins, while the good spirit stings and bites their consciences so that they turn back to the Lord. Let us now look at the Second Rule, which concerns those moving toward the Lord.

Second Rule. *In persons who are going on intensely purifying their sins and rising from good to better in the service of God our Lord, the method is contrary to that in the first rule. For then it is proper to the evil spirit to bite, sadden, and place obstacles, disquieting with false reasons, so that the person may not go forward. And it is proper to the good spirit to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and quiet, easing and taking away all obstacles, so that the person may go forward in doing good.*

This rule concerns those moving toward the Lord. They are striving for purification from sin and to serve God. In this case, the two spirits act contrary to their action in rule 1. The evil spirit bites, saddens, and places obstacles, disquieting with false reasons. In other words, the evil spirit uses **discouraging** tactics.

One of the spiritual directors at the seminary occasionally said, "If the devil can't keep you away from Christ, he will try to make your life miserable in Christ." For example, the enemy bites, i.e., he causes anxiety and tries to remove peace.

Additionally, he tries to undermine those striving to serve the Lord by take away their joy. He does so by causing sadness to sap their energy for daily prayer or even to speak of the things of God.

Furthermore, he places obstacles. Sometimes, the evil spirit will place impediments to your growth in the spiritual life. "You can't do that" or "You will never be able to accomplish this."

Finally, the evil spirit aims to disquiet our hearts with false reasons. For example, after a rough day of prayer, the enemy may

suggest, "You have never been good at prayer" or "The Lord doesn't listen to you." After a fall, the enemy may suggest, "God doesn't love you" or "You will never overcome this." In short, the "father of lies" uses false reasons to diminish your vitality in serving the Lord.

The good spirit acts in the contrary method. He gives courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and quiet, easing and taking away all obstacles, so that you may go forward in doing good.

In other words, the good spirit encourages, gives peace, and removes obstacles to help those serve the Lord better. These **encouraging** tactics are meant to lift you up and increase your vitality as you serve the Lord.

Practically: If you are striving to grow in your service to God, pay attention to the movements in your heart. Be aware that the evil spirit will try to disquiet you through biting, sadness, and discouragement using false reasons. His tactics call for action.

For example, relate your sadness to the Lord. "Lord, I do not feel like praying or I feel down today. Encourage me!" Ask God to remove obstacles in serving Him. Petition the Lord for clarity. "Lord, help me to see this situation as you see it."

Moreover, reject false reasons. The evil spirit oftentimes claims your past and future. "You have *never* have been good at this" or "You will *always* be poor at prayer. Why bother praying at all?" Make an act of the will. "Lord, this is not true! I reject these lies." Do not let the enemy have the upper hand by accepting such lies.

On the other hand, accept the actions of the good spirit! As you strive to serve God, receive the encouragement, consolations, and inspirations from the good spirit. He wants to help you!

By recognizing which spirit is speaking to you and the respective tactics of each, you can take action so as to serve the Lord with greater freedom and with more joy.



Goldy striving to grow closer to the Lord