

# From the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola

## 30-Day Silent Retreat

### THE TWO STANDARDS:

Grace: to ask for knowledge of the deceits of the rebel chief and help to guard myself against them; and also to ask for knowledge of the true life exemplified in the sovereign and true commander, and the grace to imitate him.

Annotations: 136-147

Attitude: Presuming that now, after the Kingdom mediation, I want to follow and imitate Christ; I want and desire to know the difference between Satan's and Christ's tactics. Not a question of whether I want to follow Satan or Christ, but question of being able to distinguish the plan of Satan from that of Christ.

#### The Battle:

There is a battle raging in which all of mankind is engaged, caught up. Faith is demanded to accept this mystery and admit it, as real in each life, in my life. Two great powers: The spirit of light vs. the spirit of darkness, joy-despair, cunning-simplicity...struggling to gain my soul. There is tremendous inner tension in my life...to do good, avoid evil, be selfless-selfish, lazy-work, a constant tearing apart, as it were, of the soul, to destroy unity, peace and tranquility. The exercitant is to attend carefully to the intention of Christ his Lord, which by itself is not a very startling suggestion. But it is followed by the advice to turn his attention also to the intention of 'the enemy of human nature'. This is something new, and also frightening. The purpose of this meditation is to gain insight into what is happening in this world. It is at once clear that there is more to life than merely being saved by God. If history proves anything, it demonstrates how bitterly Satan is opposed to this mission of God's Son. There is a battle being waged for the love and loyalty of man. Christ calls and wants all men under His standard; similarly, Satan tried to gather all men under his.

Satan is (exists) and he is very active; and the exercitant is no match for this fallen angel. God not only wants all men to be won back to His love, to be saved, but He wants to send so many persons, apostles, etc. throughout the world in order to spread His doctrine among all men. In other words, it is not merely the dimension of men being attacked by Satan, but also that of God being in need of help in order that all men hear His sacred doctrine.

#### Intention (Plan) of Satan:

The strategy of Satan is clear: he wants me to say 'I will not serve', to go against the purpose of my creation and my personal call to love.

Satan's program: riches, honor, pride; the desire to possess, the desire to be somebody, the desire to exist absolutely for self, be autonomous, to assert self unconditionally.

When Ignatius speaks of riches, he does not mean money in the first place. It is not money that makes a man rich; but what makes riches (or an office, or job, or position) so desirable is the security that they carry with them. And security is closely allied to independence.

Now, according to Satan's plan, the rich man (or self-sufficient man) will the more easily come to or attain the honors of this world; there is no question of seeking the honors of this world, but a man, who has what he wants will naturally not be slighted or passed over. Ordinarily he will be judged a wise and prudent man. (Think of politicians, men of wealth, positions, etc.) These honors are not necessarily condemned or considered sinful; it's just that when one is rich and independent, honors come that man's way, naturally.

## Two Standards: (cont'd)

This man is not said to take any action against God; nowhere is it said that this man is wicked or sinful or malicious. But therein lies the subtlety of Satan's plan; the rich man will receive his share of self-esteem of his fellow men, and he will turn into a proud man; he becomes self-satisfied and thinks he is without need of God. He refuses to acknowledge that he is in need of God's gifts. Now Satan leads him to all sorts of vices.

The subtlety of Satan's plan does not lie in man's occupation with himself. The subtlety is found when this self-occupation gradually obliterates the presence and even the existence of God. The framework of religious practices may still be there; by all standards he gives the impression of being a good Christian. But God has become a stranger to him. He no longer has any use for God. Thus the end for which he was created is obscured.

### Intention (Plan) of Christ:

The strategy of Christ is clear: to say 'yes' to his invitation, to help him establish the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace, to work with Him and thus attain glory.

Mentality of Christ: the importance of poverty, littleness; the importance of disrepute; the importance of persecution. Christ calls his apostles to love as He did, to do what He did, to put on His attitude and spirit. He urges simple detachment from riches; he urges poverty...spiritual poverty at least: actual, if God so chooses. He urges open acceptance of insults and contempt against the vanity of the world. These two lead to humility and all other virtues. The two enemies are not fighting in two different parts of the same field. There is a head-on clash.

Humility is the rejection of self-occupation, self-sufficiency, self-complacency; in short, it is the elimination of self before God who is Lord.

The first step to this is spiritual poverty, i.e. right order in one's life; its essence consists in this, to wish in accordance with God's good wishes. The second step is insults and contempt; this contrasts with the honor and esteem of the world, toward which the rich man gradually is drawn. Therefore, the exercitant who wants to be put seriously under the standard of Christ must be ready for insults and contempt; if the exercitant seriously wants to follow Christ, he must be prepared to be laughed at and looked down upon. The exercitant is being prepared to follow Christ even where he will be slighted, despised, ignored and so forth.

Now, one has a more fully extended vision of God, Satan and this world, and of himself, as drawn into this conflict that is raging. He asks to be won over by Christ and the grace to assist Him in winning over His fellow men; all this in poverty and in bearing insults and wrongs uncomplainingly, if it be God's will.

No hasty decisions are made. One only realizes the seriousness of the situation in which he finds himself and prays for the grace to be permitted to help Christ.

Colloquy: Spir. Exercises #147

Readings: Judges 6, 7 (Gideon)

Gaudium et Spes, #13

37; Lumen Gentium: #16