DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

A gift given to us through St. Ignatius of Loyola

St. Ignatius of Loyola was not only the founder of the Jesuit order, but also authored 14 “rules” for discerning how God moves in our lives.

If you have not yet read the “Rules of Discernment” by St. Ignatius of Loyola, there is no better time than now! Fear not, it’s not a long list by any means (in fact, they can easily fit on one page front and back). However, you can spend your whole life trying to master and understand them. How do these apply to family life? Well, in many ways.

In fact, we can use them to see how God is trying to speak to us through our daily interactions as a family, especially with our spouses. They can also help us see where another family member may be in their journey, and how to guide them back on the right path. Let’s review three of them in this article, and expand upon how they can help us and our families.

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

Wow! St. Ignatius of Loyola does not mince words, and he has a very profound understanding for us in this rule. When we are cut off from God’s graces because of poor decisions, the enemy (Satan) will keep leading us down that path, while the good spirit (God) will try to “prick us” back. It makes me think of missing Mass on Sunday. It can start with just one time, then snowball into a regular occurrence. This is why it’s important to build healthy habits as a family, then never deviate from them, no matter what temptations may come our way.

SAVE THE DATES! Men Feb 20, Women Apr 24
Featuring EWTN speakers and Bishop Cahill
Family Prayer: Lord, help us to be an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred in our home, let us sow love; darkness, light; and anger, joy. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

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

So this rule is basically the inverse of the first—if we are heading down the right path, God will continue to lead us that way and grant us the graces we need. However, Satan is trying to pull us away from Him. Remember the cartoons with a good angel on one shoulder, and a bad angel on the other? There is much truth in that illustration! But we can take comfort in this rule, knowing that God will give us all we need if we want to follow Him. What does this mean for our families? Do not be afraid to go deeper in your faith journey! If you feel called to go to a certain event, or get more involved in church, do it! God will reward your faith and generosity by giving you all you need to complete the task. And if you ever feel distracted from following Him, swat that temptation away like a pesky fly!

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

Yes, I know I jumped ahead a few rules here, but I really wanted to mention this one. Basically, if you are going through a tough time, keep on moving! Sometimes folks want to “escape” a bad situation by making a drastic change, but God wants us to keep the faith until the right decision becomes clear. It reminds me of a country song that basically says if you’re going through the devil’s home, keep on moving don’t slow down...because you might get out, before the devil even knows you’re there!

If you’ve enjoyed this taste of St. Ignatius of Loyola’s Rules of Discernment, I invite you to consider doing three things:

1. Read all of his rules, and discuss with a friend or family member. You can find all 14 of them by a simple Internet search

2. Listen to a recent interview we had with Father Timothy Gallagher, OMV who has written several books on this topic. You can find the interview on the Diocese of Victoria Family Evangelization Facebook Page under “videos” or on the YouTube Channel under “Weekly Wednesday Webchats.” It was posted on Wednesday, Oct. 28

3. Consider purchasing and reading his latest book on “Discernment of Spirits in Marriage,” available on Amazon for just $14.99. (If you listen to the webchat with Father Gallagher, you will hear of a way to get it for FREE )

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter! If you found it helpful, please encourage family and friends to subscribe at www.victoriadiocese.org/families-of-joy. Until next time, “Families, become what you are!” - St. Pope John Paul II

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