

St. Ignatius of Loyola's Second Rules for Discernment: For Spiritual Directors

Kathy: You are waiting for your next meeting of spiritual direction, and the doorbell rings. You answer and greet Kathy. You have accompanied her spiritually for six years and know her well. When you and Kathy are seated in your office, you pray briefly and prepare to listen.

Kathy is forty-five, a married woman with three children aged twelve, fourteen, and fifteen. She is a mature Christian with a faithful life of prayer and service in her family, work, and parish. Kathy is an accomplished high school teacher, appreciated by her students.

Her relationship with Jesus is the heart of her life, and you have seen this grow in recent years especially. Kathy's marriage with Bruce has correspondingly deepened, and her presence creates a warm and loving center in the home.

Five years ago, the principal of the local Catholic high school approached Kathy and asked that she consider teaching in this school. He had been appointed principal a year earlier, commissioned with resolving the school's problems. For decades, the school had served the diocese well and was highly esteemed. It drew students from upscale families who appreciated the solid education offered to their children. Graduation from this school guaranteed entrance into good colleges, and many former students held positions of responsibility in society.

More recently, however, things had changed. Poor management led to straitened finances and divisions among the faculty. As tensions increased, many of the staff, among them the best teachers, resigned. The quality of teaching declined, and parents looked elsewhere for their children. The school continued to deteriorate, and its survival was now in question.

Knowing Kathy's deep faith and professional competence, the principal asked her to consider teaching at the school. He saw Kathy as one who would strengthen the Catholic dimension of the school, foster unity, enhance the academic level of the school, and might be key to its survival. Kathy asked your help to discern this request, and, after a well-made discernment, accepted the principal's offer.

She put her heart into teaching and helping the students. As the principal had foreseen, her presence and way of life strengthened the school's Catholic identity. Over the next five years, the school progressed well. Unity was restored, the quality of teaching improved, finances began to stabilize, and enrollment gradually increased. The school was moving toward viability. Kathy's warm, competent, and faith-filled presence contributed significantly to this growth. Well aware of this, the principal expressed his gratitude to Kathy. In your meetings with her, you have seen her grow spiritually through this service.

Now, Kathy begins to speak. She tells you that three weeks ago, as the fall semester began, she attended a meeting at a Catholic high school. This was an inner-city school that served disadvantaged students. Kathy was struck by the poverty of the surroundings and of the school itself. The needs of the students, the limited resources of the school, and the dedication of the staff deeply impressed her. Speaking over lunch with one of them, she learned of the school's

need for qualified teachers and of the difficulty in finding them. The challenging conditions and modest salary offered deterred most candidates.

Kathy then shares an experience in prayer two weeks earlier. The Gospel text was Luke 4, and verse 18 especially spoke to her heart: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.” The time of prayer was warm and suffused with awareness of God’s closeness and love. As she pondered Jesus’s predilection for the poor, the thought of the inner-city school returned. Might God be inviting her to share, in this way, more directly in Jesus’s love for and mission to the poor? Might he be calling her to teach in this school? Joy accompanied this prospect. Her heart lifted at the thought of serving these impoverished students, of the new closeness with Jesus this might foster, and the deeper self-giving this would permit. As she prayed, Kathy was moved to tears, blessed tears that expressed the joy her heart felt.

Kathy tells you that this thought and this joy have returned several times since in her prayer. She wonders: Do the joy, the sense of God’s love, and the desire for new closeness with Jesus that accompany the thought of the inner-city school indicate that God is asking her to teach there? Is this his way of revealing his call? When she has shared these experiences, Kathy ceases to speak and looks to you for help.

What will you say? What counsel will you offer? How will you help her?

SUMMARY, THE TWO SETS OF RULES:

First Week Rules: enemy’s tactic: discouragement (spiritual desolation)

Second Week Rules: enemy’s tactic: energy (deceptive spiritual consolation)

ANNOTATIONS 8-10, HOW TO USE THE TWO SETS OF RULES: TEXT

DECEPTIONS THROUGH ENERGY: AN IGNATIAN SURVEY

1. **John** is a young, single professional. Since college he has abandoned the sacraments and all involvement in the Church. Influenced by others, he has adopted, at first hesitantly and then with increasing willingness, a life of self-indulgence and promiscuity. He likewise engages in seriously dishonest dealings in his work. His friends now invite him to spend a week in the Caribbean. John knows that this will be a week without moral restraint. He is excited by the possibility and makes the necessary plans with enthusiasm.

Ignatius: **First Rule.** The first rule: in persons who are going from mortal sin to mortal sin, the enemy is ordinarily accustomed to propose apparent pleasures to them, leading them to 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 a contrary method, stinging and biting their consciences through their rational power of moral judgment. (314)

2. **Martha** is making her first directed retreat. The initial days have been a time of discouragement: prayer has been difficult, God has seemed distant, and on several occasions, she has nearly abandoned the retreat. But today, all that has changed. Prayer has been warm and joyful, the scriptural texts have come alive, and God has felt close. Now Martha is certain that her problems are over, that her spiritual struggles are finished, that heaviness of heart will no longer burden her spiritual life. She dedicates herself with great energy to prayer as the day continues. (323)

First Rules, Tenth rule. The tenth: let the one who is in consolation think how he will conduct himself in the desolation which will come after, taking new strength for that time. (323)

3. **Clare** began daily prayer with Scripture three months ago. Each morning, she dedicates half an hour to this prayer. At first, though she was faithful, she found the prayer dry and difficult. In recent weeks, however, she has felt God's closeness and his love in her daily prayer. This awareness of God's love gives joy to her heart throughout the occupations of the day. She is filled with satisfaction that she has achieved so rich an ability to pray, and is pleased to see herself progressing so surely in her spiritual life. (324, first part)

First Rules, Eleventh Rule. The eleventh: let one who is consoled seek to humble himself and lower himself as much as he can, thinking of how little he is capable in the time of desolation without such grace or consolation. On the contrary, let one who is in desolation think that he can do much with God's sufficient grace to resist all his enemies, taking strength in his Creator and Lord. (324)

4. **Mark** is a university student who is easily moved by enthusiasm. Most often, however, his enthusiasm does not endure at length. Recently a friend invited him to a retreat. Mark was struggling with loneliness at the time and willingly accepted the invitation. He was deeply struck by the sense of community and fraternal love he found among the participants. Now, filled with joy in the Lord, Mark is certain that he has at last found his way. He desires to embrace this new life fully, and he decides to become a priest. He plans to interrupt his studies and apply for admission to the local seminary. Mark enthusiastically shares his decision with the university chaplain.

Annotation 14: "If the one giving the exercises sees that the one receiving them is going on with consolation and with much fervor, he should admonish him that he not make and inconsiderate or precipitous vow or promise; and the more he knows him to be of unstable condition, the more he should forewarn him and admonish him." (14)

5. **Andrew** is a married man in his thirties who, after years away from the Church, six months ago embraced his faith with new commitment and energy. Aware of this, and knowing his business skills, his pastor asked Andrew to serve on the parish financial council. Andrew was happy to accept. Now he delights in exercising his ability to handle financial matters effectively. Gradually, he increases his involvement in the financial council. This additional activity, together with his responsibilities to family and work, strains his energies.

Nonspiritual consolation, virtue of prudence.

HOW OFTEN WILL DIRECTORS ENCOUNTER SUCH PERSONS?

“Certainly, directors will meet persons in the second spiritual situation. Michael Kyne, SJ, however, adds a useful caveat against assuming too quickly that a directee is, in fact, in this spiritual situation: “It is a fact of my experience, brief though that may be, that by far the greater number of problems concerning Christian living, even for religious and priests, occur on a level of discernment which is not related to a such a settled aim of a generous service of God. The discernment is, so often, no more than that exercised by beginners in the Christian life—according to the rules set out in the first week of the Exercises.” *The Way Supplement* 6 (1968): 23.”

Ongoing generosity and

Peak times of such generosity (for example, Week Two, Spiritual Exercises)

TITLE: A GREATER DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

RULE 1: THE TACTICS OF THE GOOD SPIRIT AND THE ENEMY: TEXT

RULE 2

Kathy: The days are passing, and you and Kathy meet monthly. You have encouraged her to pray daily with Scripture, and she does so with generosity. Most mornings, she spends an hour or close to it in this prayer. You have taught her the examen prayer, and she prays this each evening. At your suggestion, she also keeps a journal in which she records her spiritual experience in general and specifically in regard to the inner-city school.

First meeting

In the meeting, you and Kathy speak of various aspects of her spiritual life. At a certain point, she turns to the inner-city school. She tells you that she continues to joy when she contemplates this possibility. She feels God's closeness and love as she does so.

Then she says, "Last week, I prayed with Lk 4:16-21. I was especially struck by the words of Isaiah that Jesus applied to himself and his messianic mission, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.' I thought about Jesus's special love for the poor and his calling to bring to them the joyful message of the Gospel. I found that I couldn't move past this verse. I felt a deep sense of the Lord's closeness and love for me as I prayed. It filled the whole hour. I spent the next three days praying with this verse, and that joy and love never diminished. In all that time, I felt drawn to the inner-city school."

You note this experience, and you see, as does she, its relevance to Kathy's discernment. With Kathy, you reverence the spiritual consolation given in her prayer. As regards the discernment itself, you do not see clearly, and you do not attempt to anticipate that clarity, trusting that this will come as the process continues. Your calm and attentive presence, your assurance to Kathy that she is proceeding well in the discernment and that God will bring the clarity she seeks, reassures Kathy, and she leaves encouraged in her discernment.

Second meeting

Kathy tells you of another experience of prayer. The text this time is Lk 9:58, "Jesus answered him, 'Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.'"

Kathy says, "Yesterday, I prayed with Luke 9, those who want to follow Jesus. Like the passage in Luke 4, when I read this, I found that I just wanted to stay there, close to Jesus. I sensed how what mattered most to him was the readiness to follow wherever the Father would send him, without attachments to places or things. That freedom really drew my heart. The prayer was warm, and I felt loved. The hour passed so quickly. I will go back to this tomorrow. As I prayed, I continued to feel attracted to the inner-city school."

Again, you and Kathy both see the relevance of this experience to her discernment. Once more, you note the spiritual consolation Kathy experiences as she prays with Luke 9. You do not see clearly in the discernment, but you note her experience as it unfolds.

Third meeting

Kathy shares similar experiences in prayer, especially when she prayed with Lk 16:19-31, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and Lk 18:18-30, the man whom Jesus calls to give what he has to the poor and follow him. When other texts portray Jesus's own poverty and his love for the poor, she experiences a similar spiritual consolation. The attraction to the inner-city school continues to accompany this prayer.

Fourth meeting

Kathy arrives for her meeting with you, and you note immediately that she is deeply moved. She tells you that she had a Saturday afternoon free the preceding week and decided to spend it at a

local retreat house. She goes there from time to time and loves the peace and recollected prayer the house affords her.

Once there, Kathy prayed for a time, and then, according to her custom, after lunch went out walking. She enjoyed the silence, the freshness of the winter cold, the snow, and the trees that overhung the path. She walked, thinking of nothing in particular, absorbing her surroundings. Kathy says, “Then something happened that I’ve never experienced before. I don’t quite know how to describe it. One minute I was just walking through the woods, and then suddenly, my heart was filled with an overpowering sense of God’s love. It was overwhelming to feel so deeply, deeply loved. I was completely happy, I think the happiest I’ve ever been. God was close to me, loving me, in a way I’ve never felt before. I don’t know how long all this lasted: maybe ten minutes, maybe fifteen, maybe more. I was so caught up in it, there was such sweetness and joy in it, that I could only receive it. And while this was happening, I knew that God is calling me to teach in the inner-city school. It was so clear that I couldn’t doubt it. The joy of that experience is gentler now, but it has not left me.”

Kathy turns to you and asks, “Can you tell me what happened? What was this? Am I right, that my discernment is done, that God has given me all the clarity I need? I want to be completely open to you, and I’ll follow your guidance. But in that experience, I couldn’t doubt that God was calling me to the inner-city school.” Then she asks, “Can you help me?”

How will you help Kathy? Obviously, she has received a wonderful, powerful, experience of spiritual consolation. What can we say of such experiences? What place do they have in a process of discernment? Kathy is convinced that her discernment is concluded. Is she right? Should you affirm her conviction? Or must more be done?

Rule 2: Text

Consolation with Preceding Cause: Examples

Ruth Burrows, *of a time of struggle*: One evening during this time, my eyes fell on the words: “O the depth of the riches and wisdom of God! How incomprehensible his judgements, how unsearchable his ways!” [Rom 11:33]. In the depths of my soul I became aware of a steadfast peace. The world could rock and reel. Everything and everyone could fail me. I myself could be broken, could be a complete failure in the eyes of men but nothing could prevent me from loving God.

St. Augustine, *listening to the singing of the psalms in church*: “How I wept when I heard your hymns and canticles, being deeply moved by the sweet singing of your Church. Those voices flowed into my ears, truth filtered into my heart, and from my heart surged waves of devotion. Tears ran down, and I was happy in my tears.” (*Confessions*)

Julien Green: I never meet anyone without being told that we are racing headlong toward an era of fresh disasters. I had a long fit of insomnia last night, during which many thoughts stirred

in my mind, most of them very gloomy. Then I remembered St. Theresa of Avila's prayer: "Let nothing trouble you, let nothing terrify you. God only." And I once more found peace. (*Diary*, February 2, 1946)

Consolation without Preceding Cause: Examples

A woman in her fifties recounts the following: I was fourteen years and three months when something happened—something which I have always believed to be a grace but have never been able to explain clearly. I suddenly found myself withdrawn—at least partly—from earthly things and plunged into an excessive and inexplicable joy, as if I were immersed in love and infinite gladness. I was intensely conscious of my state and at the same time of the impossibility of reflecting on it at the moment, and the certainty that I was with God. When I resumed contact with the familiar life around me—it was in the morning and I was doing some very ordinary housework, polishing a floor to be exact—I had acquired a new knowledge of God. Theoretically, I knew nothing more than before . . . but to me God had ceased from that moment to be a kind of abstract idea . . . Now he had become a living being whom I knew henceforth, not only because I had been told about him . . . but because I had mystically perceived him, touched him. This event decided my life. It dominated it. The very memory of it, accompanied I may say by the memory of all the graces which followed and have marked my path, supports my life, sustains it, consoles it, delights it. I return to it again and again to renew my fervor.

Julien Green: "The memory of a winter evening has stuck in my mind more clearly than any other instance. It happened in the pension I tried to describe in *The Strange River*. My father and I shared the same bedroom. I was in bed; my father was saying his prayers. All of a sudden, I was seized with an unutterable happiness, a happiness of spirit that tore me free from myself. For a few minutes my soul was completely absorbed in God. I could not have said what was taking place in me, but my thoughts, instead of wandering here and there, as they usually did, came to a standstill in a sort of rapture that I have never experienced since. And the very words I use to try to describe the indescribable, only serve to confuse my memories. And yet, this is not so. What lives in my memory is the feeling of deep security – a little of which still remains – the inexpressible peace enjoyed by the soul when it takes shelter under the all-powerful wing of the Lord." (*Diary*, May 30, 1941)

St. Francis of Assisi: Soon after Francis had returned to Assisi, his companions elected him king of the revels, and gave him a free hand to spend what he liked in the preparation of a sumptuous banquet as he had often done on other occasions. After the feast they left the house and started off singing through the streets. Francis's companions were leading the way; and he, holding his wand of office, followed them at a little distance. Instead of singing, he was listening very attentively. All of a sudden the Lord touched his heart, filling it with such surpassing sweetness that he could neither speak nor move. He could only feel and hear this overwhelming sweetness which detached him so completely from all other physical sensations that, as he said later, had he been cut to pieces on the spot he could not have moved.

When his companions looked around, they saw him in the distance and turned back. To their amazement they saw that he was transformed into another man, and they asked him: 'What were you thinking of? Why didn't you follow us? Were you thinking of getting married?'

Francis answered in a clear voice: ‘You are right: I was thinking of wooing the noblest, richest, and most beautiful bride ever seen.’ His friends laughed at him saying he was a fool and did not know what he was saying; in reality he had spoken by a divine inspiration. The bride was none other than that form of true religion which he embraced; and which, above any other is noble, rich and beautiful in poverty.

Rule 2: Two Questions

1. How often does spiritual consolation without preceding cause occur?

How frequently may spiritual directors expect to encounter spiritual consolation without preceding cause in directees’ experience?

Ignatius does not address this question, and the commentators are divided. Some consider it common experience; others see it as rare and reserved to exceptionally holy people. My own best answer after decades of spiritual direction is that it does indeed occur in directees’ experience, but not with great frequency. Spiritual directors, I believe, should not expect to encounter such consolation regularly. But, over their years of spiritual direction, they may recognize it on occasion.

2. What if a directee shares an experience that you consider might be spiritual consolation without preceding cause, but you are not sure?

A principle: “In discerning, we use the material that is clear. We may let the rest go, and remain in peace.” A directee, for example, shares an experience and you help him or her describe it more fully, but neither the directee nor you see clearly whether this is a spiritual consolation without cause. In this case, you help the directee to reverence the spiritual consolation received, you note it as part of the discernment, and you encourage the directee to pursue the discernment with peace—a peace that you also share in your role as director.

RULE 3: CONSOLATION FROM THE GOOD SPIRIT AND THE ENEMY, TEXT

First Meeting: Kathy then shares an experience in prayer two weeks earlier. The Gospel text was Luke 4, and verse 18 especially spoke to her heart: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.” The time of prayer was warm and suffused with awareness of God’s closeness and love. As she pondered Jesus’s predilection for the poor, the thought of the inner-city school returned. Might God be inviting her to share, in this way, more directly in Jesus’s love for and mission to the poor? Might he be calling her to teach in this school? Joy accompanied this prospect. Her heart lifted at the thought of serving these impoverished students, of the new closeness with Jesus this might foster, and the deeper self-giving this would permit. As she prayed, Kathy was moved to tears, blessed tears that expressed the joy her heart felt.

RULE 4: THE ENEMY'S TACTIC DESCRIBED: BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END, TEXT

RULE 5: THE SIGNS OF THE END, TEXT

First Scenario

Second Meeting: Kathy returns to meet with you. She mentions some significant experiences in teaching during the past weeks and shares her spiritual experience during this time. As she speaks, Kathy again refers to the thought of the inner-city school. This thought continues to awaken joy and a sense of closeness with the Lord. When Kathy considers serving in the inner-city school and so sharing more directly in Jesus's love for the poor, she feels loved by God and is drawn to this school. She tells you that she has no greater clarity than before about this, only that the attraction remains, and it makes her joyful in the Lord.

You listen attentively as she speaks and help her with opportune questions to describe her experience more fully. This time, too, you do not see clearly whether the thought of serving in the inner-city school is of God or not. You remain calm, and Kathy finds peace in your serenity. You affirm her daily fidelity to prayer, the review, the examen, and journaling, and you encourage her to continue in this way. She leaves encouraged and ready to continue the discernment.

You remain calm because you know that, if both of you continue to be attentive, the signs of the good spirit or the enemy will emerge.

Third Meeting: Kathy again speaks of her prayer and her teaching, both of which have been rewarding in the past weeks. Again, she shares her joy at the thought of teaching in the inner-city school. The thought recurs from time to time, always with an uplift of heart.

You listen carefully to what Kathy shares, do not perceive any further light on her discernment, commend her faithfulness to prayer and review, and encourage her to continue in this way.

Fourth Meeting: Kathy remains fulfilled in her teaching, essentially joyful, and her prayer is alive. The question of the inner-city school arises once more. Kathy tells you that she is proficient in Spanish and now wonders whether, were she to teach in an inner-city school, a school in which Spanish is needed might be best. Such a school would allow her to place this talent also at the service of the disadvantaged.

Still, you do not see clearly in the discernment, but you note the progression of the thoughts about the inner-city school. A new element has entered, that of Spanish and an inner-city school in which this language is needed. You listen warmly and affirm Kathy in how she is proceeding in the discernment. Once more, she leaves in peace.

Fifth meeting: Kathy shares her spiritual experience of the preceding weeks, a time of occasional struggles but above all of joy in her teaching and at home, and consolation in prayer. She says that the thought of the inner-city school continues to arise and remains a source of joy and closeness with the Lord. Kathy tells you that were she to seek a Hispanic inner-city school, the one in which she taught during graduate school might be the best. She was well received there, and she knows that the principal needs a new teacher there for the coming year.

You note the further development of the thoughts, and you perceive a “course of thoughts” unfolding. You do not yet see clearly in the discernment and recognize the need for “much” attention as this course of thought develops, watching for the signs of the good spirit or the enemy.

Sixth Meeting: Kathy tells you that a review of the buildings of her present high school has concluded that various alterations are necessary for the school’s future. A new capital campaign would have to be undertaken, and in some way the teachers would need to be involved. They would also have to teach in reduced quarters during the months of rebuilding that would follow the campaign. She adds that her heart sank a little when she realized the time and energy that all this would require, but that she was willing to do what was necessary. Kathy says that it would be easier to undertake this effort were it for the poor of an inner-city school where the need is so great, rather than in a well-to-do suburban school. In general, her teaching has gone well, and prayer has been warmed with God’s love.

You note that, for the first time, Kathy has expressed stirrings of the heart other than joy and peace. They are slight—“her heart sank a little,” “it would be easier to undertake this effort”—but they are present. Still, you do not see clearly in the discernment, but you are alive to the progression of the thoughts and the affective component of this discernment. You know that you need to “give much attention” to all of this as you and Kathy continue to meet.

Seventh Meeting: When you meet, Kathy describes a difficult conversation with the parents of one student. She tells you that sometimes these days she finds it harder to be patient with such parents when she considers that they have so much—so much more than the real poor—and yet complain about the school. Nonetheless, in general the past month has been blessed both in teaching and in prayer. Kathy also tells you that if she were to teach in the Hispanic inner-city school, it would allow her to improve her Spanish, something she has always wanted to do. This would also allow her to work with the Hispanics in her parish and, on a more personal and spiritual note, help her to read the great Carmelite spiritual masters—St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila—in the original. She has always loved Carmelite spirituality and has long desired to read these saints in the original in order to benefit more from them.

As you listen, you note further signs of affective trouble—“she finds it harder to be patient”—and this time more obvious than in the preceding meeting. You remember that Kathy did not speak of her heart sinking, of struggling to undertake a new effort, or of impatience, before the thoughts on the inner-city school arose. You begin to suspect that Ignatius’s affective signs of the enemy may be present, “if it [the course of the thoughts] weakens it, or disquiets, or troubles the soul, taking away the peace, tranquility and quiet, which it had before, it is a clear sign that it proceeds from the bad spirit.”

You also note a further progression in the course of the thoughts. For the first time, Kathy has spoken of Hispanic ministry in her parish. You wonder, too, whether there may not be something more self-centered—though, certainly, focused on her spiritual life—in this new thought that by teaching in Spanish she would have new access to the Carmelite masters. You wonder now whether the more objective signs of the enemy may be appearing, for example, “something distracting.” You do not have full clarity in the discernment, but you are well aware that signs of the enemy may be emerging, and you will continue to give much attention to this as you and Kathy meet.

Eight Meeting: Kathy expresses her irritation at her colleagues’ unwillingness to help in the capital campaign and to accept limited classroom space during the rebuilding. She was also sharp with one of her students and feels bad about this. She says, “I don’t know what is happening to me. I just don’t have the same peace. I get impatient with my students and at home more than I used to. I think that maybe the inner-city school is the answer. I even wonder sometimes whether it might be time for me to stop teaching. I’ve done it for many years. Maybe I’ve given what I could.”

Kathy has now reached the “end” of which Ignatius speaks in Second Rules, 5: she feels that God is calling her to the inner-city school, “I think that maybe the inner-city school is the answer.” Now, too, you find that the signs of the enemy—the affective and objective diminishment with respect to what Kathy had before the thought of the inner-city school arose—are evident. Again, they are clear because you have helped Kathy give much attention to her spiritual experience and you have done so as well. When you compare the peace and fruitful service that Kathy had before the thought of the inner-city school arose and her present condition, the descent (Second Rules, 6) is apparent.

You help Kathy to see this, and you explain her experience in the light of Second Rules, 5. She perceives the truth of this and is relieved to understand what has happened to her in these months. She sets aside the thought of the inner-city school and renews her dedication to her present service in the upscale school. Her peace and joy return. She is grateful to you for helping her in a difficult discernment.

As this scenario shows, when a person is tempted under the appearance of good and Ignatius’s Second Rules are well applied, no harm comes to this person. For a period and with no fault of her own or of yours, Kathy pursues such a temptation. When you apply Second Rules, 5, the temptation is unmasked, Kathy rejects it, and pursues her present fruitful service.

Second Scenario

We will presume that the first scenario never happened, and, instead, your meetings with Kathy develop in a second and different way. As in the preceding scenario, Kathy has already shared with you her prayer with Lk 4:18 and her thoughts about the inner-city school.

Second Meeting: This takes place just as the corresponding meeting in the first scenario. Kathy's teaching and prayer are alive and joyful, and the thought of the inner-city school recurs always accompanied by a sense of God's love and closeness

Third Meeting: This, too, occurs as in the first scenario: Kathy's joy remains, and the thought of the inner-city school awakens spiritual consolation. As in the first scenario, you help Kathy to be at peace and encourage her to faithful prayer and review.

Fourth Meeting: Kathy continues to be consoled in her prayer and in her work. The thought of the inner-city school persists, always with joy and a feeling of God's love.

Fifth meeting: Kathy tells you that her life is growing happier and her teaching more fruitful. Her joy makes her a better teacher, and her students are responding to her in a new way. Her colleagues, too, relate to her with new warmth and gratitude. The thought of the inner-city school often returns and always with consolation.

You mark the persistence of Kathy's thoughts about the inner-city school and the consolation that accompanies them. You continue to give much attention to Kathy's experience in this regard.

Sixth Meeting: Kathy tells you that a review of the buildings of her present high school has concluded that significant alterations are necessary for the school's future. A new capital campaign would have to be undertaken, and in some way the teachers would need to be involved. They would also have to teach in reduced quarters during the months of rebuilding that would follow the campaign. Kathy has long seen the need for these improvements and knows that the school will serve the students better because of them. She is eager to help in the coming campaign, and her enthusiasm has encouraged other teachers to participate. Kathy's prayer is consoled. The thought of the inner-city school remains consoling as well.

You note that, as the time of discernment progresses, Kathy remains joyful and her teaching fruitful. In fact, this joy and fruitfulness increase. You see no sign of the enemy whether affectively or objectively. You begin to think that the signs of the good spirit are present: as the discernment unfolds, the process does appear to be "all good, inclined to all good." You will continue to give much attention to this as the discernment unfolds further.

Seventh Meeting: When you meet, you sense Kathy's peace, joy, and readiness to serve. A difficult situation arose with the parents of one student, and Kathy's evident care for their son, her patient listening to the parents, and her proposals of how to respond to the situation won the hearts of the parents and their son. Kathy is hopeful that the student may progress in a new way. The principal thanked Kathy for handling a sensitive situation so well. Kathy tells you that she feels increasingly convinced that God is calling her to the inner-city school where so many parents and students have such great need and so few resources. Her eyes are alive as she tells you this, and you see the joy reflected in her face.

As you meet with Kathy, your sense that the good spirit is at work is strengthened.

Eighth Meeting: Kathy says, “We’ve been discerning for some meetings now whether God is calling me to the inner-city school. I have to tell you that I think God is calling me to this school. The more I consider this, the happier I become, and this has been consistent. I can see the effects in my daily life, too, at home and at work. I appreciate the way we have not hurried on this and have given the process time. It does seem to me, though, that the discernment is clear. What do you think?”

In terms of Second Rules, 5, Kathy has reached the “end”: “I think God is calling me to this [the inner-city] school.” You find yourself agreeing with Kathy. No sign of the enemy’s descent has appeared in the months of discernment. On the contrary, the process does appear to be “all good, inclined to all good,” the sign of the good spirit. Kathy’s joy and service even grow during this time. In the light of Second Rules, 5, you confirm Kathy’s discernment.

RULE 6, LEARN FROM PAST EXPERIENCE, TEXT

You and Kathy are in your eighth meeting (first scenario). You have discerned the signs of the enemy, and Kathy now knows that God is not calling her to the inner-city school. Together, you have discussed this thoroughly, and Kathy is at peace. In view of Second Rules, 6, you are not done!

Now is the time to propose to Kathy the review of Second Rules, 6. You explain to her what this review covers (the little-by-little progression of the enemy’s temptation) and what she is to note in it. You encourage her to do this soon, today, if possible, in any case, without delay. You suggest that she write what she sees and that you discuss it together in your next meeting. Kathy realizes the value of this review and willingly agrees.

That evening, when the children are settled, Kathy opens her journal. Slowly and attentively, she reads what she has written since the thought of the inner-city school arose. Now she sees her increasing loss of peace. Now, too, she notices the course of thoughts that began with one inner-city school and led to other considerations and another school. Kathy describes all this in her journal.

In your next meeting, she shares with you what she has written. You listen, and with opportune questions help her understand her experience more fully. You both know that if the enemy attempts again to deceive Kathy through spiritual consolation and good and holy thoughts, she will be ready in a new way. Because her present experience is “known and noted,” she *will* likely guard herself in the future from the enemy’s customary deceits. You render a great service to directees when you counsel the review proposed in Second Rules, 6.

RULE 7: DISCERNMENT IN THE BEGINNING, TEXT

To illustrate Second Rules, 7, we will explore two scenarios of Kathy’s first meeting with you after she prays with Lk 4:18.

First Scenario

You meet, and Kathy tells you of her visit to the inner-city school three weeks earlier. Then she describes her experience of praying with Lk 4:18.

She says, “I was praying with the day’s Gospel as usual. The text was Lk 4:14-21, about Jesus’s words in the synagogue at Nazareth. Verse 18, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor,” especially spoke to my heart. I could see Jesus in the synagogue, standing, with the scroll of Isaiah in his hands, and reading the prophecy about his own mission. I saw the love in his eyes, the desire to reach out to the poor, to bring them glad tidings, to free them from their suffering, and to bring them the joy of salvation. I was deeply, deeply struck by his love for the poor and that they were the first people he mentioned when he described his mission in the Spirit.”

As she speaks, you see that she is moved. You listen with attention and reverence.

Kathy continues, “The prayer was warm and uplifting. I felt God’s love and closeness. I felt close to Jesus as he pronounced these words. They spoke directly to my heart and gave me joy. Then I thought of the inner-city school, of its poverty, of the difficult lives of the students, and of the urgent need for qualified teachers there. I wondered, ‘Lord, are you calling me to teach in that school? Is that what you are saying to me? Is that how you want me to love the poor? To love them as you love them? Is that how I can best serve you and your people?’” The thought gave me joy and seemed, somehow, to bring me even closer to Jesus.”

She concludes, “The thought of the inner-city school and that joy have been there from time to time in the two weeks since.” Then she asks you, “Is this God’s way of revealing a call to the inner-city school? Does this mean that God is asking me to teach there?”

You are aware that Kathy is a person in the second spiritual situation. You note that she has received spiritual consolation with preceding cause and that a good and holy thought has arisen with it: the thought of closer love and imitation of Jesus by serving the poor in the inner-city school. You know that this might be of the good spirit and an indication of where God is leading her. But you know also that this might be the enemy tempting Kathy under the appearance of good.

Can Second Rules, 7 help you respond to Kathy? She appears to be a person “proceeding from good to better” in love and service of God. Does the new thought, when it first arises, enter her heart “sweetly, lightly, and gently” like a drop of water entering a sponge? Or, when it first arises, does it enter “sharply and with noise and disquiet,” like a drop of water falling on a stone? With what initial affective resonance does this thought arise?

In her account of the moment when the thought arises, Kathy makes no mention of any even slight sense of trouble, of anxiety, heaviness of heart. With Second Rules, 7, in mind, you gently ask Kathy to describe that moment as best she can. She willingly does so, and you help her with apposite questions. As she speaks, you find no trace of sharpness, noise, or disquiet when the thought first arose. You perceive that a process of discernment will be necessary, but you also

recognize that the thought appears to have arisen like a drop of water entering a sponge. You note that this might be a first sign of the good spirit at work, and you will keep this in mind as the process unfolds.

Second Scenario

All is the same as in the First Scenario until Kathy describes her prayer further.

She continues, “The prayer was warm and uplifting. I felt God’s love and closeness. I felt close to Jesus as he pronounced these words. They spoke directly to my heart and gave me joy. Then I thought of the inner-city school, of its poverty, of the difficult lives of the students, and of the urgent need for qualified teachers there. I wondered, ‘Lord, are you calling me to teach in that school? Is that what you are saying to me? Is that how you want me to love the poor? To love them as you love them? Is that how I can best serve you and your people?’” I have to say that the thought was initially a little troubling, but it did give me joy and seemed, somehow, to bring me even closer to Jesus.”

She concludes, “The thought of the inner-city school and that joy have been there from time to time in the two weeks since.” Then she asks you, “Is this God’s way of revealing a call to the inner-city school? Does this mean that God is asking me to teach there?”

As above, you are aware that Kathy is a person in the second spiritual situation. You note that she has received spiritual consolation with preceding cause and that a good and holy thought has arisen with it: the thought of closer love and imitation of Jesus by serving the poor in the inner-city school. You know that this might be of the good spirit and an indication of where God is leading her. But you know also that this might be the enemy tempting Kathy under the appearance of good.

In this second scenario, can Second Rules, 7 help you respond to Kathy? Once again, she appears to be a person “proceeding from good to better” in love and service of God. Does the new thought, when it first arises, enter her heart “sweetly, lightly, and gently” like a drop of water entering a sponge? Or, when it first arises, does it enter “sharply and with noise and disquiet,” like a drop of water falling on a stone? With what initial affective resonance does this thought arise?

You have listened attentively to Kathy’s account of her prayer. You recognize that she has received spiritual consolation with preceding cause and that, with it, a new good and holy thought has arisen. This time, however, you note a slightly discordant note when the thought first arises, “I have to say that the thought was initially a little troubling, but it did give me joy and seemed, somehow, to bring me even closer to Jesus.” You note that small initial sense of trouble, and you are aware that this might be the sign of the enemy, that the thought has entered “sharply and with noise and disquiet,” like a drop of water falling on a stone. Again, you recognize that a process of discernment will be necessary, but you will remember this initial disquiet, aware that it may be a first sign of the enemy tempting under the appearance of good.

It is possible, too, that Kathy may not mention this initial trouble when she first recounts her prayer with Lk 4:18. It may be submerged, in her memory of her prayer, in the greater and more lasting sense of joy as she prayed. Most likely, she will not be aware of its significance. You, as her director, however, and conscious of Second Rules, 7, will invite her to describe that initial moment more fully and then this troubling movement may emerge.

In both the first and the second scenario, you are unlikely to consider the discernment complete at this point. You have a first indication that the good spirit (first scenario) or the enemy (second scenario) may be at work in the thought of the inner-city school, and this is valuable input toward the discernment. You will accompany Kathy in her discernment and watch as “the course of the thoughts” unfolds. You will “give much attention” as they progress, alert for signs of the one spirit or the other. But you will do this with a first conjecture as to which spirit may be at work.

RULE 8, THE TIME DURING AND THE TIME AFTER: TEXT

Kathy arrives for her meeting with you, and you note immediately that she is deeply moved. She tells you that she had a Saturday afternoon free the preceding week and decided to spend it at a local retreat house. She goes there from time to time and loves the peace and recollected prayer the house affords her.

Once there, Kathy prayed for a time, and then, according to her custom, after lunch went out walking. She enjoyed the silence, the freshness of the winter cold, the snow, and the trees that overhung the path. She walked, thinking of nothing in particular, absorbing her surroundings.

Kathy says, “Then something happened that I’ve never experienced before. I don’t quite know how to describe it. One minute I was just walking through the woods, and then suddenly, my heart was filled with an overpowering sense of God’s love. It was overwhelming to feel so deeply, deeply loved. I was completely happy, I think the happiest I’ve ever been. God was close to me, loving me, in a way I’ve never felt before. I don’t know how long all this lasted: maybe ten minutes, maybe fifteen, maybe more. I was so caught up in it, there was such sweetness and joy in it, that I could only receive it. And while this was happening, I knew that God is calling me to teach in the inner-city school. It was so clear that I couldn’t doubt it. The joy of that experience is gentler now, but it has not left me.”

She continues, “That gift of grace and the joy of it was present for some days after that experience. I was joyful and felt God’s closeness, his love enveloping me. I wanted to respond fully to the Lord’s call, to embrace this new step from the heart. I want that even now as I teach in my present school.

“When I visited the inner-city school, they asked if I would consider tutoring students on Saturdays. They have an urgent need for such tutors. I found myself thinking that this could be a good way to begin the transition. I thought that there may be other ways to get involved and that this tutoring might open the door to some of these as well. I decided to speak with the principal of the inner-city school about this.

“I decided, too, that it would help the transition if I began, even now, to step away from the various roles I’ve had these past years and prepared others to assume them. I also thought about changing our vacation plans for the summer in order to make the transition sooner. I could talk with my husband about this.

Kathy looks at you and says, “I only want to say a complete yes to the Lord’s call.” She pauses, and adds, “My friend Claire and I have often talked about serving the poor. I’m sure that, if I share my plans with her, she’ll be interested. I thought that I could invite her to join me in tutoring on Saturdays.”

CONCLUSION

You have accompanied Kathy in her discernment regarding the inner-city school. In a first scenario, she, with your help, has seen that God is not calling her to the inner-city school. This has become clear as the course of her thoughts unfolds and signs of diminishment appear (Second Rules, 5). The thought of the inner-city school was the enemy tempting under the appearance of good.

In a second scenario, Kathy, with your help, has seen that God is, in fact, calling her to the inner-city school. This has become clear because, as the course of her thoughts unfolds, there are no signs of diminishment. Kathy remains joyful and open to all good and even more than before this thought arose (again, Second Rules, 5).

In either scenario, Kathy has benefitted greatly from your help in applying Ignatius’s Second Rules. Because you share these rules with her, she is alerted to the possibility of temptations under the appearance of good. She understands that, at this point in her spiritual journey, spiritual consolation and good and holy thoughts are not sufficient for discernment, that the enemy may employ this tactic, and that such consolation and thoughts must be well discerned before acting upon them. Realizing this and with your accompaniment she willingly enters a process of discernment.

Kathy prays daily during the time of discernment. You have explained the review of prayer, the examen prayer, and journaling to her. Faithfully, she notes her spiritual experience and shares it with you in your meetings. Through the first several meetings, neither of you see clearly whether God wants the inner-city school or not. You are at peace with this and help Kathy likewise to be at peace. Both of you, in your respective roles, continue to be attentive.

Gradually, the signs of diminishment or its absence clarify the discernment, and it concludes. Many fruits follow.

Kathy is now free to direct her energies with joy toward the choice she knows God wills. If the thought of the inner-city school was a temptation under the appearance of good, because you have helped her apply Ignatius’s Second Rules, neither Kathy nor those—who are many—whom her discernment will affect are harmed.

Having experienced Ignatius's Second Rules, Kathy has grown in discernment. As Ignatius intends (Second Rules, 6), she will discern similar temptations more readily for the future. As her discernment concludes, she is deeply grateful to God. She is also profoundly grateful to you for your guidance in a potentially confusing discernment.

You, too, are grateful, grateful to God whose assistance has blessed you in a significant discernment. And you are grateful to Ignatius whose Second Rules have proven indispensable in accompanying Kathy. Because you have walked with Kathy, you, too, understand these Second Rules better. You know that what you have learned will bless your future direction.

What if, having properly applied Ignatius's Second Rules, questions regarding the discernment remain? Kathy, for example, with your help has utilized these rules but still does not have the clarity she needs. In that case, neither you as director nor Kathy are at fault. God is, Ignatius says, calling her to discern according to a further mode.

In a first mode of discernment, God simply makes the discernment clear. In a second—to which Ignatius's Second Rules belong—God gives clarity through discernment of spirits, that is, through applying either the First Rules (if the discernment involves spiritual consolation and desolation) or the Second (if the discernment involves temptations under the appearance of good). When clarity has been given through neither first- or second-mode discernment, then God is calling the person to discern according to a third mode.

In the third mode, a person discerns through reason enlightened by faith and open to God's grace. The person prayerfully reviews the advantages and disadvantages for God's greater glory of both options (for Kathy, the move to the inner-city school or remaining in the upscale school). The option that presents a preponderance of reasons for God's greater glory is shown to be God's will.

Resources

Books

Ignatius of Loyola's Second Rules for Discernment: A User's Guide for Spiritual Directors, 2023

Spiritual Consolation: An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment of Spirits, 2007

The More Discerning Priest: Mature Discernment in Diocesan Priesthood, 2023

Article

"The Discernment of Spirits: When Do the Second Week Rules Apply?" *The Way*, 47/1–2 (Jan/April 2008), 125–142. Available online: search for "Timothy Gallagher" and the title of the article.

Recorded Talks

Discerning Hearts app: tap on: “Spiritual Formation,” then “Fr. Timothy Gallagher,” then “2nd Week Rules for Greater Discernment.”

Available also on YouTube