

## Introduction to the Consideration of Different States of Life [135] - Repetition

The example which Christ our Lord gave of the first state of life, which is that of observing the Commandments, has already been considered in meditating on His obedience to His parents. The example of the second state, which is that of evangelical perfection, has also been considered, when He remained in the temple and left His foster father and His Mother to devote Himself exclusively to the service of His eternal Father.

While continuing to contemplate His life, let us begin to investigate and ask in what kind of life or in what state His Divine Majesty wishes to make use of us.

Therefore, as some introduction to this, in the next exercise, let us consider the intention of Christ our Lord, and on the other hand, that of the enemy of our human nature. Let us also see how we ought to prepare ourselves to arrive at perfection in whatever state or way of life God our Lord may grant us to choose.

### TWO STANDARDS [136-147]

**Prayer:** the usual preparatory prayer. I will beg God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of his Divine Majesty.

**First prelude:** This is the history. Here it will be that Christ calls and wants all beneath His standard, and Lucifer, on the other hand, wants all under his.

**Second prelude:** This is a mental representation of the place. It will be here to see a great plain, comprising the whole region about Jerusalem, where the sovereign Commander-in-Chief of all the good is Christ our Lord; and another plain about the region of Babylon, where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer.

- "See," says Calveras, "that this is a general mobilization. Everyone has been rallied." It's like a massive, worldwide draft, of both the good and the bad.

**Prayer of petition:** This is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for a knowledge of the deceits of the rebel chief and help to guard myself against them; and also, to ask for a knowledge of the true life exemplified in the sovereign and true Commander, and the grace to imitate Him.

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"In considering this exercise," writes Calveras, "it is fitting to make a very clear distinction between the real factors, which come every day to souls in real life, and the scene we are considering, with its imagined factors. There are two very real calls to men that are touched upon in this Exercise. The first is a general call made to everyone, no matter their state or condition in life, one from Christ and the other from Lucifer. The result is that in the interior war, men chose one of two options: either submit self-love to perfection and resist

its callings, as Christ wants, and this is to be under His standard, or to surrender to its desires and impulses, and this is to pass to be under Satan's standard. Since man must necessarily be one of two things, either a saint or a sinner, enlisting under one standard or the other is inevitable. Christ calls us to resist, very clearly proposing to all a love for poverty and humiliation, against carnal and worldly love, inviting them to fight alongside Him, so that, spurred on by His love and example they might conquer easier and more quickly.

At the same time, Lucifer, with his deceit and under an appearance of good wants to persuade all follow that self-love that he encourages them to.

However, the other call is that of the emissaries who Christ 'sends them throughout the whole world to spread His sacred doctrine among all men, no matter what their state or condition.' Note that this is *not* a general call for everyone, but rather only those who are chosen. There are certainly many of them, since we are told 'Consider how the Lord of all the world chooses so many persons, apostles, disciples, etc.' This isn't part of the history of the exercise, properly speaking, meaning that the point isn't that we're focusing on the calling of the apostles, but rather to help all to dispose themselves to reach perfection in their state by the only path that leads there, by taking the three steps of poverty as opposed to riches, insults or contempt as opposed to the honor of this world, and humility as opposed to pride."<sup>1</sup>

**[140] First Point:** "Imagine you see the chief of all the enemy in the vast plain about Babylon, seated on a great throne of fire and smoke, his appearance inspiring horror and terror."

- "Although this is a fictional scene," Calveras reminds us, "Ignatius does it in a way that is perfect for what we are to contemplate. We can see Lucifer's intention to bring us to overwhelming pride (he is seating on a throne), how unsubstantial his offers are (the throne is not of gold or ivory, but rather of fire and smoke, pure appearance, with darkness and discomfort), and the very effective impression as a way to dominate (he is horrible and frightening), because he cannot make use of any of the natural and irresistible attractiveness of true beauty, truth, and good."<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, the scene "is near Babylon, where the tower of Babel once stood, to signify the pride and the confusion which Satan ever labors to stir up in the hearts of men. He is elevated on a throne, to denote the ambition he arouses in all to rise above their fellows. The throne consists of flames, ever restless, and smoke, darkening the mind of his miserable dupes. His monstrous features reflect the ugly vices of his heart."<sup>3</sup>

**[141] Second Point:** "Consider how he summons innumerable demons, and scatters them, some to one city and some to another, throughout the whole world, so that no province, no place, no state of life [religious, lay, priest, deacon, bishop], no individual is overlooked."

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<sup>1</sup> Calveras, *Ejercicios intensivos*, 253-254.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 255-256.

<sup>3</sup> Coppens, *Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 92.

- "This dispersion of demons," Calveras tells us, "without leaving any person without temptation, is a real fact. The call of the numerous demons to his side in order to receive their commission is fictional, in order to make the scene more dramatic. Note that Lucifer doesn't send particular *men* as his emissaries; this is because men usually cooperate in the work of demons wherever they are, be it by praising and criticizing with a worldly spirit, and in this way creating a vast army of slaves. A fear of worldly honor is an open and gross temptation with which the enemy enlists the beginners, and the vain honors of the world is the sneaky resource with which he wants to bring the retreatant of second week to increased pride, whom he knows he should tempt under the appearance of good."<sup>4</sup>

**[142] Third Point:** Consider the address he makes to them, how he goads them on to lay snares for men and bind them with chains. First they are to tempt them to covet riches (as Satan himself is accustomed to do in most cases) that they may the more easily attain the empty honors of this world, and then come to overweening pride.

The first step, then, will be riches, the second honor, the third pride. From these three steps the evil one leads to all other vices.

- Consider what it is that the demons do: "lay snares and bind with chains: beginning with the simple desire or interest for something, in order to later develop in them a particular disordered affection.
- First, they are to tempt them to *greed*: again, if the person making the retreat really has the dispositions of the second week, the devil won't tempt them openly, because those temptations would be rejected. Rather, he will tempt them under the appearance of good, meaning, under a natural sort of fittingness and even under the appearance of serving God, aspiring to have something that is valuable and appreciated by all. Money is just this sort of thing, as are valuables or good family ties, and this is why, in the majority of cases, the first step in temptation is riches. However, the world also values personal riches, like qualities, talents, knowledge, and the like, and so greed in this sense is to cultivate and develop those gifts so that they might be more valuable, can also be the first step for many."<sup>5</sup>
- In all of this, "the demon understands full well that the temptation is to be adapted to each one's character. With many there is from the beginning an inordinate love of honor and distinction; these may at once be assailed on their weak point and more rapidly led into pride. Others are more readily allured by the bait of pleasure; they may first be tempted by innocent amusements, then by more inordinate enjoyment, till they cast off all restraint, loving self to the contempt of the Creator, which is but another form of pride."<sup>6</sup>
- The second step is "the vain honor of the world: the greed of having something that is valuable is in order for a person to be appreciated and praised, in order to be respected and honored vainly by men, meaning, not attributing those good

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<sup>4</sup> Calveras, *Ejercicios intensivos*, 256-57.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 257-258.

<sup>6</sup> Coppens, *Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 93.

- things to God, from whom all good things come, but rather to man, who is their mere repository; here, it is man who is celebrated, or appears to be celebrated.
- Lastly, this leads to overweening pride, that is, a high decree of self-conceit on account of the worldly praises and honors. The one who thinks that they have something valuable, and if others, even just because of that accomplishment, praise them, that person feels superior, fixed on themselves and what they possess, without needing to consult others or seek help, with the right to intervene and impose their thoughts and likes on others, a right to be preferred to others, and dispensed from the obligations and responsibilities that everyone has, refusing submission to all authority, and even reaching the point of despising God Himself.”
  - “From these three steps they lead to all other vices: pride is the vice that God detests the most, and He promises to punish it, and the punishment is, precisely, to let the person fall into other sins without ceasing, until they fall into the abyss. This happens both on the natural plane, since this pride naturally opens the path for all other sins, but also on the spiritual plane, where it feeds off of peace of conscience and the favors received from God, and thus leads directly to false consolations from the enemy.”<sup>7</sup>

## **Second Part: The Standard of Christ**

**[143]** In a similar way, we are to picture to ourselves the sovereign and true Commander, Christ our Lord.

**[144] First Point:** “Consider Christ our Lord, standing in a lowly place in a great plain about the region of Jerusalem, His appearance beautiful and attractive.”

- “This scene,” says Calveras, “is taken from reality. After the calling of the Apostles, upon going to preach the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, of which He is the summary, Christ went to a lowly place and, sitting down and raising His eyes to His disciples, began to teach them (Mt 5:1; Lk 6:17, 20). In this humble place, we can see Christ’s intention to lead us to humility, and in the beauty and grace of His person and position, the delight of the true life of the spirit, the fruit of embracing His doctrine regarding love of poverty and humiliation.”<sup>8</sup>

**[145] Second Point:** “Consider how the Lord of all the world chooses so many persons, apostles, disciples, etc., and sends them throughout the whole world to spread His sacred doctrine among all men, no matter what their state or condition.”

- “Christ makes use of the exterior ministry of men in order to counter Lucifer’s emissaries. However, God works directly in souls as well, through grace and the angels.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Calveras, *Ejercicios intensivos*, 258-59.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 160.

**[146] Third Point:** “Consider the address which Christ our Lord makes to all His servants and friends whom He sends on this enterprise, recommending to them to seek to help all, first by attracting them to the highest spiritual poverty, and should it please the Divine Majesty, and should He deign to choose them for it, even to actual poverty. Secondly, they should lead them to a desire for insults and contempt, for from these springs humility.

Hence, there will be three steps: the first, poverty as opposed to riches; the second, insults or contempt as opposed to the honor of this world; the third, humility as opposed to pride. From these three steps, let them lead men to all other virtues.”

- “‘To seek to help all’: all men are called to perfection, and so all should help so that everyone can achieve it, exhorting each other to take the three steps that Christ Our Lord proposes here:
- First, highest spiritual poverty: the first Beatitude that Christ proclaimed was for the poor in spirit (Mt 5:3), those who are in spiritual poverty. In accord with this, Saint Ignatius places the first step in order to reach perfection spiritual poverty, not any sort, though, but highest spiritual poverty, which embraces the complete detachment from any inclination or affection with respect to riches, without placing any trust in them and with the firm resolution not to commit any sin, not even venial, as well as placing all my love and preference in actual poverty, although with the willingness to embrace whatever is more for the divine majesty;
- And, likewise, to seek *actual poverty*: the actual renunciation of good or their use, and of the free use of money, to live poorly with all the privations and annoyances that follow upon it, if God should call to this state of life.
- A desire for insults and contempt: insults, false witnesses, and affronts are the contempt we seek, to be thought of as crazy and foolish, and think nothing of me. The last of the Beatitudes, that of persecution, is for these who suffer for holiness. This is the second step, which includes detachment from all inclination and desire for honors and to be esteemed by men, with a decided will not to commit any mortal or venial sin, not even to obtain all earthly honors and glory, not to flee from humiliations, and with the sincere preference for contempt, provided, always, that this is for God’s greater glory.
- From these two things comes humility: humility of heart, which should be understood as an absolute subjection to God and His representatives, without any sort of internal deliberation about breaking a commandments, divine or law, under penalty of mortal or venial sin, and the complete surrender of one’s self to the Divine Will. Such humility follows from the preceding two steps, that is, highest spiritual poverty and a scorn of riches, and a desire for insults and contempt with an absolute distain for vain worldly honors. In this way, the soul achieves an unbreakable peace and is strengthened to surrender everything is has and is in the fulfillment of the Divine will.
- It is this submission of heart, then, and by means of it and the surrender of the heart to the law and desires of God, that disposes us to keep all of the commandments: poverty removes impediments, and a desire for humiliation

keeps our minds and hearts focused on moving heavenward.”<sup>10</sup> This is how we become saints and get to heaven.

**[147] Colloquy [actually, three colloquies]:** A colloquy should be addressed to our Lady, asking her to obtain for me from her Son and Lord the grace to be received under His standard, first in the highest spiritual poverty, and should the Divine Majesty be pleased thereby, and deign to choose and accept me, even in actual poverty; secondly, in bearing insults and wrongs, thereby to imitate Him better, provided only I can suffer these without sin on the part of another, and without offense of the Divine Majesty. Then I will say the Hail Mary.

**Second Colloquy:** This will be to ask her Son to obtain the same favors for me from the Father. Then I will say, *Soul of Christ*, that is, the *Anima Christi*.

**Third Colloquy:** This will be to beg the Father to grant me the same graces. Then I will say the Our Father.

“The point of these colloquies isn’t to make a generous offering of ourselves to God, but rather to already see ourselves under His standard, and this takes places in stages. First, we sign up for complete spiritual poverty, to which everyone is called. Actual poverty, which protects our desire for perfection, allows us to give ourselves even more freely to God’s service. To actually suffer insults and contempt corrects our self love and sensibility.”

“We can ask ourselves: How well do I appreciate the great benefits for the perfection of my soul and its spiritual well-being that come from the *highest spiritual poverty* and the *desire for insults and contempt*, and what understanding do I have of that danger that is to be found in *greed for riches* and the *desire for worldly honors*? Have I been able to correct *my natural judgment* which sees humiliation and poverty as opposed to my excellence and happiness?”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 261-262.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 263, 266.