The Two Standards

The Preludes

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.

History: Here it will be that Christ calls and wants all beneath His standard, and Lucifer, on the other hand, wants all under his.

Composition of place: Drawing on the imagery of the book of Revelation, St Ignatius has us portray the two rival camps: Christ in 'the whole region about Jerusalem' and Lucifer around 'the region of Babylon'.

Prayer for knowledge: We need to ask for light for our minds. Therefore, we will pray for discernment of spirits:

- We need to recognize the deceits of the devil. We also need the courage to resist the allurements of Satan
- We need to recognize the inspirations of Christ. We have to recognize him as our Model. In knowing him we are moved to imitate his life.

We have to realize that there is a war going on: **"the life of man on earth is warfare."** In this war no one can be neutral: the Lord says: *"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters?'* (Mt 12:30) We cannot hope to avoid the battle: *"Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for (someone) to devour?"* (1 Pt 5:8) Unless we reject him, we will be devoured by him. That is why the apostle James is his letter says, *"Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7) We have to realize that, this war is "unto death" Whoever wins, keeps his life, whoever loses, loses forever his very end.

Satan and his principles

We come then to contemplate Satan upon a throne of fire and smoke in the region of Babylon.

The fire signifies the destruction he has brought upon himself and is trying to impose upon the whole world. True, God allows him to use his power against us in order to try our love. Yet God does not suffer us to be tempted above our strength, but bestows abundant graces and easy victory on those who call upon him with humility and trust.

The smoke signifies the darkness in which Satan shrouds his evil designs. His victims must be kept in ignorance and perplexity; they must not be clear in their own minds, nor yet go to others for instruction and counsel. Only the children of light are safe against him.

What is Satan doing unceasingly at every moment of time?
Jealous of us who are called and destined for heaven, he is determined to drag us into his own misery.

Then, he is sending his devils everywhere, to every country, every town, and every person. No one is too high for him; no one is too low for him. His attack is universal.

Saint John Chrysostom tells us that each one of us has a particular demon who works assiduously for our damnation, and will hang around us right up until the end.
Saint Peter says, ***"Your adversary the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour."*** (1 Peter 5: 8)

What is his plan?

The devil cannot act *directly* on our higher faculties, the intellect and the will. God has kept these as a sanctuary for Himself, and He alone can enter there and touch our wills without doing violence to them. But the devil can act directly on our external senses, or internal senses: for example, on our imagination or memory. This is the devil's field. There he tries to set "nets and snares."

All of his agents have had thousands of years of experience since Adam and Eve's fall.
Don't think, that he always appears as ugly as he is, because in order to destroy us, many times he appears beautiful and attractive.

He uses every kind of trick.
Sometimes he appears as a beautiful boy knocking on doors saying, *"trick and treat."*
He uses tricks that delight the senses and others that satisfy the natural man. He even knows how to transform himself into an angel of light, with the pretext of promoting God's greater glory, the good of souls.

Sometimes he tries to trick us in a very soft way: a feeling, a thought, something apparently harmless. Then he tries to put threats, and he knows that just one threat is enough to have a very good beginning in the order of evils.

Sometimes he knocks very loudly, with noisy hits. Then he tries to convince us that he is so strong, and to fight against him is useless.

Strategy

St Ignatius tells us that the devil first tempts us with the lust of riches, in order that we may more easily come to vain honor in the world and afterwards to ever growing pride, the root of all evil.

The very beginning of sin: riches

Riches represent whatever can be found in the world apart from God. It can be translated into things or peoples, objects that we can have as our treasures. **It can be translated into comforts or an inordinate attachment to a particular person, place, or work,** under the pretext of good, and surely the **attachment to our own ideas or consideration of things.**
They show up as our treasures, they are something visible, something that gives certain sureness.

It is the temptation of the desert, *"When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, "Up, make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." And Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."* (Ex 32: 1-2) Aaron made a calf; and they said, and they proclaimed that this piece of nothing was their god.

Having turned to creatures we forget God and become satisfied with our possession.
The words of Christ against riches are clear enough, *"Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger."* (Lk. 6: 24-25)

"Then said Jesus to his disciples, I say to you, that a rich man will hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Mt. 19: 23-24)

The empty honors of this world

We can say that the devil shows us, *"the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;* and he says to us*, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."* (Mt. 4: 8-10)
They are vainglories that last an instant.

Finally, pride

The book of Ecclesiasticus says, *"Pride is the beginning of all sin."* (10:15)
It is the beginning of all sins because it means the spirit of self-exaltation. As far as a man is proud, he will not submit his mind and will to others, even to God. He becomes a law unto himself. The good things of others are displeasing to him; meanwhile, whatever he does has his approval. Pride deprives man of supernatural help from man. Saint Peter says, *"God resists the proud."* (1 Peter 5: 5) the proud man doesn't ask for divine grace, so, he doesn't receive it.

Christ and His Disciples

It is important to observe how Christ, "The Sovereign and True Leader," behaves with the quiet and peaceful grace. Christ's campaign is absolutely opposite to the devil's.

And the divine King is constantly on the look-out for generous souls whom He may call to Himself, and instruct his sacred doctrine.

And he says, *"You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you; and I have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. Then, go and teach my sacred doctrine… omit neither place, nor state… Fear not, all power is given to me in heaven and on earth; and behold I am always with you. It is I myself that will abide with you, and through you I will continue my saving mission.*

This is my doctrine: 'Every one of you that does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple.' You have to be poor, with spiritual poverty, detachment of things; and even actual poverty. My disciples should be free

You have to be free and give up everything. Then you have to deny yourselves, your self-love, your self-will, and yourself-interest. So, sit in the lowest places, desire not to be first, but rather, last of all and servant of all. Seek no praise for yourself, but ever rejoiced when others are praised. Thank God when you are neglected and scorned. Love the humble and hard work.

Then, love humility and humiliations. Take this as your treasure, because God gives his grace to the humble. Humility will be your shield, helmet and sword. If humility is your defense, God will be your Defender…"

The plan is clear: **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. And from these three steps, all other virtues.**

Colloquy

My first dialogue 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 if the Divine Majesty be pleased to choose and accept me, even in actual poverty.
- Secondly, in bearing insults and wrongs, in order to imitate Christ 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*

My second dialogue will be with Christ, asking Him to obtain the same favors for me from the Father. Then, I will say, *Soul of Christ*

My third dialogue will be with the Heavenly Father, and I will beg Him to grant me the same graces. Then I will say the *Our Father.*