

**DAY 5: Meditation****FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION PART 2 [SE#23]**

Today, we continue our meditations on the First Principle and Foundation. In that first meditation we focused on seeking a correct idea of who God is, and a deeper understanding of Him. In this second meditation, we'll focus on who man is. We'll consider Adam and all his offspring, humankind, - and, man's relationship to the other creatures on the earth that God has made.

TODAY'S MEDITATION- The First Principle and Foundation - Part 1: God

Note: Ignatius does not introduce the structure of the meditation we just described until the exercises of the first week. I have gone ahead and applied that structure to the meditations we will do here, so that you can begin to get comfortable with the method. We spend three days on the principle and foundation because it is such an essential part of the whole course of these spiritual exercises.

1. Act of the Presence of God**2. Preparatory Prayer, as in #46**

Lord, I ask that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of Your Divine Majesty. Amen.

3. Prelude 1: Summary

We can return to the creation account in Genesis. Recall the creation of Adam, the sleep that God placed him under so that He could form Eve from his side, and their vocation to tend the garden, to be fruitful and multiply.

4. Prelude 2: Composition of Place

See Adam and Eve in the garden doing their work, and at other times, in their moments of rest, and especially in the moments where they spoke and walked with God.

5. Prelude 3: Petition

Ask our Lord in prayer for **a more profound understanding of the nature and vocation of man**-the purpose that God has ordained for each member of the human race.

6. Main Points for Meditation

Refer again to the first line in SE#23: "Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul." We're going to take the ideas in this sentence one at a time.



First: man is created. The Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that while parents provide the matter for the body of each new human person, each spiritual, immortal soul is created directly by God at conception, and is destined to exist forever.

Man is made in God's image and likeness- endowed with intellect to know truth and will to love the good. These spiritual faculties mark our fundamental difference from the rest of creation (cf. Ps 8). We are made for personal relationship- with other persons and ultimately with God. Eve's creation shows that man is ordered to communion, and marriage foreshadows the total, eternal union to which every person is called. As Father James Hardon explains, our destiny of eternal loving union frames the call to "praise, reverence, and serve." God gains nothing from our obedience; creation is pure divine generosity, ordered to our beatitude.

Ignatius continues: creatures are made to help us attain our end; we should use them insofar as they help us attain that end, and rid ourselves of them insofar as they hinder us. All creation is ordered to God being "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28), and this should move us to gratitude. Yet there is a difference between use and ownership: we are stewards, not masters. Creatures are means toward union with their Creator. Ignatius' tool of *tantum quantum*, which means "insofar as," is an important tool to use in discerning how to use the creatures God places around us. We are to keep what leads us to God and cut off what does not.

Man exists in time, and he becomes more perfect over time through his work- that's what God intended. We aren't like angels, who were created perfect from the very start, and only had to make one, simple choice about who they would serve. Man needs to work over the whole course of his life to make this decision. But as soon as Ignatius points us towards the things we are supposed to work with, these creatures God has surrounded us with, he also points to a difficulty: these can be a hindrance. Because freedom is in the mix here: we are able to use creatures in ways that are not conducive to our end.

So understand: we are not simply looking at the goodness of creatures in themselves. It's true that creatures are objectively good because they were created by God. We're looking at creatures in relation to human action. We're entering a moral dimension- and creatures, in relation to the human will, are neutral, because humans can use creatures in diverse ways. We can respect their natures and use them well, but we can also ignore their natures and use them in unintended ways that deviate from God's plan.

So we can't go strolling through life saying "everything God created is good, therefore, I can pick what I like and it'll be good for me." Yes, everything is good on the level of its being. But it does not follow that whatever I use that thing for is good.

We have said that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. This means freedom, freedom to choose our final end. Freedom is for love of the good, but that love is, in fact, an option, not a given. We can use creatures to do evil things- and this is not contrary to



the notion of a good God. It's a condition for freedom, and for love. It has to be there if we are going to be able to love.

In reality, we are prone to misuse through concupiscence, the wound of original sin, which inclines us toward pleasure apart from right reason illumined by faith. Therefore, we must be ready to deny ourselves, setting aside even good things if they impede our final end. What helps one may hinder another. Honest self-examination is needed: our loves, fears, relationships, roles, possessions.

Often we do not choose evil outright; we may be doing good duties, like family work, daily tasks yet subtly we begin treating these things as ends in themselves. Our satisfaction shifts from God to self. Disorder arises not from creatures but from our wounded will. They point us to our purpose; we twist that purpose away from Him.

So we can reflect: when we become aware of disorder, it is in fact our own soul that is the source of that disorder. The creatures around me point me towards the truth: that I am created to praise, reverence, and serve God. It is my wounded will that twists this and turns me away from Him.

And as we meditate and understand this more deeply, we need to begin to move our will to *rid* ourselves of what is undermining these truths in our own lives. We need a clear, objective, forceful attitude here- we need courage. When there is a tumor in the body, we don't delay in cutting it out. And we want the doctor who identifies that tumor to be very searching and specific in his diagnosis. That is our spiritual business here. The spiritual edifice in our souls that we are trying to build during these exercises depends on this foundation. Abstract things motivate us for a few minutes. But knowing the importance of the details here, and seeing this in the light of eternity, motivates us for a lifetime. How can I order my life with eternity in view?

7. Colloquy

Reveal to Our Lord what you find as you meditate, especially the parts of your heart that you find are given to creatures instead of to Him. Speak with Him, listen to what he says, and finish with an **Our Father**.