



DAY 6: Meditation

FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION PART 3 [SE#23]

We'll finish the final meditation on the Principle and Foundation today. Yesterday we focused on the nature and supernatural vocation of man, and his relationship with all the creatures God has placed around him in creation. Today we'll learn and meditate on one of the most important principles of the exercises: Ignatian indifference.

TODAY'S MEDITATION- The First Principle and Foundation - Part 3: The Principle of Indifference

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'll return once more to Genesis. Here we recall Adam's mandate to rule over creation. "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

4. Prelude 2: Composition of Place

Use your imagination to hone in on that moment where Adam receives this stewardship- perhaps you can arrange the scene almost in a visual hierarchy- God standing above Adam, Adam just below him, looking up at Him, and then all the creatures, the plants and animals that Adam is charged to work with and use for God's glory in groups below him.

5. Prelude 3: Petition

Ask our Lord in prayer for **a perfect indifference towards all these creatures, so that you can use and dispose of them in a way that is truly ordered to you getting to heaven.**

6. Main Points for Meditation



We will now see the last two paragraphs in #23 of the Spiritual Exercises. They read **“Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things. Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.”**

Because all non-human creatures are means to help us reach God, we should strive for indifference toward them in themselves. Naturally, health is preferable to sickness and wealth to poverty. Yet we follow a crucified Lord, whose providence may use sickness or poverty for our good. Saint Jean de Brébeuf was frail and often ill in seminary, a suffering that later prepared him for the hardships of mission in New France (modern day Canada.) After ordination his health returned, and he evangelized the Huron with heroic perseverance. Had he clung to health, he might never have fulfilled his vocation. His freedom, which he learned in suffering, enabled him to endure darkness and remain faithful.

Ignatian indifference, then, is for those who want to follow Christ whatever the cost. It is not apathy but purified love: “perfect freedom from inordinate love or fear of created things” (Fr. James Hardon). It echoes Christ’s call to have no anxiety (Mt 6:25) and even His stark warning about “hating” father and mother is strong language meant to loosen over-attachment so we can choose whatever best serves salvation. True indifference grants liberty to follow what revelation shows is best.

From the positive angle, this is about freedom for the greater good. Some creatures help us more than others; we must train mind and will to recognize and embrace them wholeheartedly. Fra Angelico was not indifferent to his art, nor Pier Giorgio Frassati to recreation, nor Carlo Acutis to the internet- they used these means for holiness. What undermines freedom is concupiscence, which seeks pleasure and avoids pain without right reason. It can even distort our spiritual life, as when we prefer consoling feelings in prayer over God’s actual call. Thus indifference requires strengthening intellect and will with virtue so the will does not cloud judgment to justify its preferences.

Ignatius adds a caveat: indifference applies where we have free choice and no obligation. We cannot be indifferent to Sunday Mass, marriage vows, family duties, or responsible care for health, though even here attachments can become disordered. During our time in this retreat, we should identify the major attachments that bind our hearts, since correcting these will purify lesser ones. Ignatius presents reasons but leaves the choice to our freedom, just as God does. We decide whom we love, and thus we decide our destiny.

So once again, the particular grace to ask for is: to know who God is and who I am, and to be indifferent to all else so as to choose what leads to holiness. “Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created,” and in that context, the grace to be indifferent to what He has placed around me, so that I am free to choose the things that will help me fulfill God’s will and become a saint.



So let us be concrete. We know our sins and suspect the attachments that distance us from Christ, yet we often remain vague. Ignatius is direct: you were created to love God and save your soul; detach from what hinders, embrace what helps. Souls are at stake—including those God may save through you.

Colloquy

Once again, reveal to him what you find in your heart. Ask Him to help you, especially in the places where you are weak, or afraid. Listen to what he says, and finish with an **Our Father**.