



DAY #16: Meditation

THE CALL OF THE KING [91-100]

Introduction to Week II

We are moving into the second week, the second stage of the Spiritual Exercises (recall, there are four “weeks”). We will have more ‘contemplations’, placing ourselves in scenes in the life of Christ. We are moving from a more abstract notion of “holiness” and making it more *concrete*. Our goal now is the **imitation of Christ**, to be His disciple, to hear His call, and to respond with our whole being. The contemplations will help us in this goal. As we said, now is the time to get more concrete. To live the Gospel in a **particular way**. We have found and worked against our attachments. Now we can better answer “what ought I to do for Christ?”

This week is known as the “center” of the spiritual exercises. We are in the time of **Elections** (major decisions in life, particularly that of vocation) and **Reform of Life** (how to live better according to the example of Christ.). This is the time of **resolutions**, specific steps to take in my life to help me respond to God’s grace. Note, our work is always a **response**, to God who has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19). We have hopefully done an exam of the first week, renewed our resolutions, our desire for holiness, our **eagerness, diligence, courage**, and manly spirit to throw aside all hindrances to God’s graces. We should have a great **hope** that God will bring about this work of grace in our soul.

As we said, we will now move from more abstract considerations (Principle & Foundation, sin, death, etc.) to the words, the example, and the person of Jesus Christ. We are called to assimilate His doctrine, to imitate His example, and to be united to His person. How? Through spiritual acts (primarily of the will). Why can we say things like “to Jesus through Mary?” Because they are in a sense “one” through their union of will. We are seeking to, as much as we can, to imitate this.

We now begin the consideration of the “Kingdom of Christ”, i.e. the “Call of the King’, a fundamental meditation, that serves as a kind of “new” Principle and Foundation, not only for the second week, but for the remainder of the exercises.

[91] THE CALL OF THE TEMPORAL KING HELPS TO CONTEMPLATE THE LIFE OF THE ETERNAL KING



The Kingdom of Christ

First, place oneself in the **presence of God**:

[75] - I will stand for the space of an **Our Father**, a step or two before the place where I am to meditate or contemplate, and with my mind raised on high, consider that God our Lord beholds me, etc. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility.

Preparatory Prayer: [46] In the 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.

Composition of Place:

[91] **1st Prelude.** This is a mental representation of the place. Here it will be to see in imagination the synagogues, villages, and towns where Christ our Lord preached.

Petition:

2nd Preamble. I will ask for the grace I desire. Here it will be to ask of our Lord the grace not to be deaf to His call, but **prompt** and **diligent** to accomplish His most holy will.

Introduction to the “Call of the King”

Prompt – no delay; diligent – having or showing care and consciousness in one’s work or duties

“Knowing that His holy will is our sanctification in this life, we look to the example of Jesus Christ, to become prompt and diligent to do God’s will, to bring out in reality the work of changing my life and ordering myself in my acts and operations.” (*Calveras, Practica intensiva, 187*)

“The contemplation on the Kingdom of Christ has been accurately called the heart of Ignatian spirituality,” says Servant of God Fr. John Hardon. “It epitomizes two ideals: . . . The first is a willingness to go **beyond mediocrity** in the service of Christ, the Son of God; the second a projection of **personal love** into the world outside, so that other souls may also ‘yield a higher than ordinary service to Christ their King.’” (All My Liberty)

Just as the Foundation of the whole spiritual life rests upon the design of God in the creation of man, so the Principle and Foundation of the 2nd and 3rd part of the exercises, treating of the Passion and Death of our Lord, is summed up in this exercise, the “Kingdom of Christ”. Note, in the Gospels, when our Lord speaks of calling those into His community, what language does He use? Church? Rarely. Far more frequently, is the kingdom.

What does the imitation of Christ involve?

1. First, the knowledge and love of His Person
2. A clear understanding of the **cause** which He represents and we are called to embrace

3. A thorough appreciation of the **degree** of generosity with which we should devote ourselves to His cause

St. Ignatius breaks this contemplation into two parts, the first which is easier to visualize, and then this will help when we **compare** this with Christ the King. Ignatius himself says that this “will help us to contemplate the life of the eternal king.” Remember, to contemplate means to be more involved in the scene, to be a player in it. Before we were **meditating** with our understanding, our memory, and our will; now, properly speaking, we have a **contemplation**, meaning, we are **involving ourselves** in the scene. What are they saying? What are they doing? (Take and Receive, 183)

1st Part – The Call of an Earthly King (the *image*)

[91] *This will help us to contemplate the life of the eternal king.*

[92] **1st Point.** *This will be to place before my mind a human king, chosen by God our Lord Himself, to whom all Christian princes and people pay homage and obedience.*

[93] **2nd Point.** *This will be to consider the address this king makes to all his subjects, with the words: "It is **my will** to conquer all the lands of the infidel. Therefore, whoever wishes to join with me in this enterprise must be content with the same food, drink, clothing, etc. as mine. So, too, he must work with me by day, and watch with me by night, etc., that as he has had a share in the toil with me, afterwards, he may share in the victory with me.*

[94] **3rd Point.** *Consider what the **answer** of good subjects **ought to be** to a king so generous and noble-minded, and consequently, if anyone would refuse the invitation of such a king, how justly he would deserve to be condemned by the whole world, and looked upon as an ignoble knight.*

Considerations

This contemplation is a kind of “parable”. St. Ignatius is trying to help us understand the call of the Christ the King by first having us look at a call we are more familiar with. For him, as a brave and valiant soldier, the call of the earthly king (one who was ‘appointed by God’) was the most relatable. One could also consider the call of a great saint, for example, St. John Paul II calling for the new evangelization, or St. Joan of Arc calling for soldiers to fight to defend the faith in France. You can think of perhaps any example of ‘heroism’ that is helpful to you. But the key elements are:

1 – **Who** is calling? Someone great, someone virtuous, someone who has high ideals, and seeks to find those who share his sentiments.

2 – **What** is he saying? What is the mission? What is the “task”? How is he asking for help? Is he ordering? Inviting? Imagine yourself



3 – What **ought** the **response** to be? Consider one called by St. Francis Xavier to help him in the mission to the far East, who is content to simply study, when there are people literally **dying** (hell) for lack of priests.

2nd Part – The Call of Christ

[95] In the 2nd Part. *The second part of this exercise will consist in applying the example of the earthly king mentioned above to Christ our Lord according to the following points:*

1st Point. *If such a summons of an earthly king to his subjects deserves our attention, how much **more worthy** of consideration is Christ our Lord, the Eternal King, before whom is assembled the whole world. To all His summons goes forth, and to each one in particular He addresses the words: "It is my will to conquer the whole world and all my enemies, and thus to enter into the **glory of my Father**. Therefore, whoever wishes to join me in this enterprise must be willing to labor with me, that by following me in **suffering**, he may follow me in **glory**."*

[96] 2nd Point. *Consider that all persons who have **judgment and reason** will offer themselves **entirely** for this work.*

God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission... I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. (St. John Henry Newman)

"Speak Lord, your servant is listening." 1 Sam 3:9

[97] 3rd Point. *Those who wish to **give greater proof of their love**, and to distinguish themselves in whatever concerns the service of the eternal King and the Lord of all, will not only offer themselves entirely for the work, but will act against their sensuality and carnal and worldly love, and make offerings of greater value and of more importance in words such as these:*

Greater. Distinguish. Fight against sensuality.

This is why, for the rest of the Exercises, we follow Christ's life, but it all begins here, with His call to us: *Follow me!* Now, let us consider what this following entails...Are we ready?

Then, only those who have heart will go forward with this prayer in their lips:

[98] Eternal Lord of all things, in the presence of Thy infinite goodness, and of Thy glorious mother, and of all the saints of Thy heavenly court, this is the offering of myself which I make with Thy favor and help. I protest that it is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice, provided only it is for Thy greater service and praise, to imitate Thee in bearing all wrongs and all abuse and all poverty, both actual and spiritual, should Thy most holy majesty deign to choose and admit me to such a state and way of life.

[99] **1st Note.** *This exercise should be gone through twice during the day, that is, in the morning on rising, and an hour before dinner, or before supper.*

[100] **2nd Note.** During the Second Week and thereafter, it will be very profitable to read some passages from the *Following of Christ*, or from the Gospels, and from the *Lives of the Saints*.

This first “note” is more applicable for the one who is taking the traditional Spiritual Exercises, but the second is very much relevant to one taking the online Spiritual Exercises. It is good to supplement our time of prayer with contact with the Sacred Scriptures and books on the saints.

POINTS OF THE MEDITATION

We arrive at this point of the Exercises with our soul ought to be full of peace and consolation from the infinite mercy of God experienced in our lives. And now what? Well, St. Ignatius tells us from the first moment, strong and clear: God with you wants something **more** than forgiving your sins. "To save the soul" is more than not sinning or being forgiven: it is to praise, to show reverence, and to serve. God wants for you also something **more** than learning to discover your disordered affections to overcome them, something **more** than being concerned with your own perfection.

He not only wants to free you from the chains of evil, He also wants to **transform you with good**. He not only wants to transform you with good, He wants that good not to remain in you, but to **spread**. He not only wants the good you have received to spread, but that all of it may be fulfilled because from the depths of your heart comes a free, generous, disinterested response; **"what have I done for Christ, what am I doing for Christ, what should I do for Christ?"** That is why at the center of this meditation is the grace that is asked: **"not to be deaf to the call..."**

To discover what is "that something more," what it means in *general* and what it will mean *concretely for me*, is the objective of this second week. It is about learning to walk in life. For this, one must go along the path, and the path is Christ: «Let us see how we shall walk on this path that is Christ Our Lord. The answer is in three ways: **knowing** Him, **loving** Him and **imitating** Him in the exemplary works that the Son of God did so that we might imitate Him in them.»

The Call

It is worth following St. Ignatius in his text, and in his images. Imagine that temporal king, model of a leader in everything: in the **goal** he proposes, in the **prize** he promises, in the **conditions** he demands: to discover what is behind the example.

There is nothing that is not just, that is not marked by generosity, greatness of spirit, nor anything that is not truly attractive to anyone who has a minimum of nobility of soul. We are in this life to do something that transcends us, something that is **greater** than our personal plans or interests.

What good would it do you to obtain everything you propose in life, if later you realize that it was not worth dedicating your whole self to it?

And when we apply the case to Christ our Lord, this story acquires colossal dimensions.

There are some certainties that emerge from this meditation, and that are fundamental:

- Christ calls us, but also **you**.
It is a universal call, but also eminently *personal* ("to each one in particular"). He has already done it, but He has not ceased nor will cease to do it. His enterprise is one, but the invitations He addresses to us are many. Conversion, change of life, to a life of grace, to greater depth... greater fruit, specific vocations, vocations within the vocation.
- It is because He has a desire, a dream, a plan.
He has fixed in His mind all the good you can receive, all the graces that can beautify your soul, and all the good you can do in your life. He wants you to be an active part of His work as well. That plan ends in communion with the one and Triune God, in the presence of God in the soul and of the soul in God. It is to make the soul like God, as far as this is possible: as good as He, as holy, as pure, as happy... That is His dream for you. This is an irrefutable proof of the dignity of your soul.
- He will not ask you for anything through which He has not passed.
When He became man, He made our ways His own. There is no pain or sorrow that He does not know by experience, there is no night, cross or trial that cannot be overcome and surpassed, because He already did it. His project for us is Himself.
- He will be by your side no matter what happens.
Do not fear His will. Trust. Entrust your life to the Lord, for He will know well what to do with it.
- There will be **suffering**, simply and among other things, because the prize He promises is *immense*. How much is heaven worth, how much does something cost? We also say. Furthermore, because it is the way to free us: one does not leave hell without passing through fire. Disordered love is not ordered but is **purified with pain**, love *ordered to Christ* is not shown except by what one is *willing to suffer for Him*, and if all this were not enough, simply because it is the path He chose to redeem us.
- If you open your soul, at each step He will show you what He wants from you:
 - What He expects and asks you to do,
 - That which He advises you to do, for your good,

- That to which He simply invites you and with which He dreams. Because what it is about, is to fulfill in us the story of holiness and the plans of holiness of God which is the true history of humanity.

Before all this, grace *not to be deaf*, but **ready and diligent**. That is what we need.

COLLOQUY

[97] **3rd Point.** *Those who wish to give **greater proof of their love**, and to distinguish themselves in whatever concerns the service of the eternal King and the Lord of all, will not only offer themselves entirely for the work, but will act against their sensuality and carnal and worldly love, and make offerings of greater value and of more importance in words such as these:*

One can close their meditation following the prayer given by St. Ignatius in point 98:

Oblation of the Kingdom

[98] *Eternal Lord of all things, in the presence of Thy infinite goodness, and of Thy glorious mother, and of all the saints of Thy heavenly court, this is the offering of myself which I make with Thy favor and help. I protest that it is my **earnest desire** and my deliberate choice, provided only it is for Thy greater service and praise, to imitate Thee in bearing all wrongs and all abuse and all poverty, both actual and spiritual, should Thy most holy majesty deign to choose and admit me to such a state and way of life.*

[100] **Note II.** During the Second Week and thereafter, it will be very profitable to read some passages from the Following of Christ, or from the Gospels, and from the Lives of the Saints.

In short, this meditation is as follows:

- 1 – Place oneself in the presence of God ; Preparatory Prayer
- 2 – Composition of Place (the two calls, the earthy king and the Eternal King)
- 3 – consideration of the points
- 4 – Colloquy – “Oblation of the Kingdom”

May God bless you.