



DAY #28: Meditation

THE TWO STANDARDS [135-147]

Introduction

Before beginning the meditation, I am going to ask God to help me draw fruit from this meditation and since He is looking at me, to grant me the grace to experience His presence at all times. I will also ask that throughout the meditation He guide me, enlighten me, so that everything I think, reflect on, and decide there may all be for the good. For His glory and the good of my soul.

At this point in the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius advises us to begin considering, for the good of our soul, what state of life (that is, to what vocation the Lord is calling me and in what manner He wants me to live that vocation). Hence, he places this text called "**Preamble for Considering States.**" That is, something very important to keep in mind before beginning to think, meditate, reflect on the meditation of the Two Standards. [**Note:** those already in a permanent state of life (married, religious, or priest), can go straight to the main text of the meditation.]

The text of St. Ignatius says:

[135] PREAMBLE FOR CONSIDERING STATES.

Preamble. Considering now the example that Christ our Lord has given us for the first state, which is the observance of the commandments, He being obedient to His parents, and likewise for the 2nd, which is that of evangelical perfection, when He remained in the temple, leaving His adoptive father and His natural mother, to occupy Himself in the pure service of His eternal Father; we shall begin together contemplating His life, to investigate and ask in what life or state His divine majesty wishes to be served by us; and so as an introduction to this, in the first following exercise we shall see the intention of Christ our Lord and, on the contrary, that of the enemy of human nature; and how we should dispose ourselves to come to perfection in whatever state or life that God our Lord gives us to choose.

Several things call our attention:

- a) We have already gone through the First Week, where we, by the grace of God, have known, experienced, recognized our sins, and have hopefully confessed them. Now in the Second Week, we have begun to **follow Christ**, to think of Him, to meditate on the things He said and did.
- b) We have seen that God wants us to know, furthermore, to love and keep His commandments. It **would have been of no use** to us to have known our sins, repented of them and confessed them, if then, continuing with the Exercises (that is, with our ordinary life...) **we had not changed** in our way of thinking, loving and acting. The **commandments** are the GREAT light that guides and must guide our entire life. "He who loves me keeps my commandments," (cf. Jn 14:15) says the Lord, and "my commandments are not burdensome." (cf. 1 Jn 5:3)
- c) Now, to live our life as God wills, it is necessary that we discover to what **vocation** God calls us and, in the case that I have already discovered my vocation, in **what way** God wants me to live my specific vocation.
- d) Hence, it is necessary that throughout the Second Week, I go on **discovering *what*** God wants of me, what He wants me to do, to leave, to begin to do.



e) We must beg God and the Blessed Virgin Mary much, much, very much that we may always know how to understand His concrete will for each one of us and strength from on High to fulfill His most holy will.

Before reading St. Ignatius's text on the meditation of the *Two Standards*, it is necessary to indicate that this meditation and the two that will follow it (the *Three Classes of Men* and the *Three Degrees of Humility*) are some of **most important** of all the Spiritual Exercises. And this is why, in the meditation of the Two Standards, the Holy Spirit wants us to understand well that God and the devil have distinct, opposite intentions, that they have different plans for us and that they act in different ways.

In other words, in this meditation, St. Ignatius wants us to realize that, before the thinking of God and the devil, their plans and actions, where do we find ourselves, what do we want, what do we love, what do we seek? To do the will of God or that of the enemy?

With that introduction, let us now proceed to the meditation properly speaking.

Meditation on the Two Standards

*First, as always, place oneself in the presence of God (see the Father beholding you, make a concrete act of faith, and perhaps pray the Our Father slowly. It is very important to never rush this step. When we pray – we are **really** coming into contact with the living God by **faith**).*

Preparatory Prayer:

[46] ... to **ask** God our Lord for **grace**, so that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be purely ordered in the service and praise of His divine majesty.

Let us see the text that St. Ignatius proposes:

[136] MEDITATION ON THE TWO STANDARDS, THE ONE OF CHRIST, OUR SUPREME CAPTAIN AND LORD; THE OTHER OF LUCIFER, THE MORTAL ENEMY OF OUR HUMAN NATURE.

The **standard** is a sign that identifies a group of persons, an army, a nation, a people, who, in principle, have common ideals, the same end, similar and complementary ways of acting, etc. I must realize that the devil forms a group that, despite the heterogeneity it may present, has similar ideas, moved by a "great" end... to lead humanity, or, better said, to lead every man and woman that exists, to their destruction, that is, to their damnation.

Christ forms a group, whose supreme ultimate end is the glorification of the Heavenly Father, and the salvation of each and every human being living on this Earth. The standard of Christ will be that which identifies the end, the means, the mode, etc. As Christ wants those who form that group to feel identified.

It would be ridiculous to have principles and use the enemy's standard... it would be foolish if done involuntarily, or perverse if done knowingly... the enemy often disguises himself so that we do not understand well from whom those thoughts come (hence the importance of reading, understanding, memorizing, studying and applying the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits). But if I know how to



"discern" (understand, distinguish, identify) which are the signs (Principles, ideas, concepts, words, ways of reasoning...) that one and the other have, it will be easier for me to know a member of which group I am.

May God deliver us from our contradictions! And grant us the grace to have truly Christian principles, and to think according to said principles and, even better, to act in accordance with them.

History

[137] 1st preamble, *is the history: here will be how Christ calls and wants all under His standard, and Lucifer, on the contrary, under his.*

Christ is a living being! Christ lives! And, therefore, He thinks, decides, loves, speaks, calls, sends. But, beware! the devil also lives, exists, and is an intelligent being, he thinks, and decides, as much as he can, and calls and sends...

Both do these things, but for different reasons. If I, after finishing this meditation, do not yet realize that the two of them have different ways of thinking and acting, it will be necessary to repeat the meditation very many times, begging God, with long prayers and tears, if necessary, to understand this... it is the goal of this meditation. And understanding it is the core of the Gospel.

Composition of Place:

[138] 2nd preamble, *composition seeing the place; here will be to see a great field in all that region of Jerusalem, where the supreme general captain of the good is Christ our Lord; another field in the region of Babylon, where the leader of the enemies is Lucifer.*

Christ is in a place of peace, beautiful, simple, serene... Jerusalem, City of Peace...
Lucifer, in a place of restlessness, ugly, noisy, complicated, in ruins... Babel, place of confusion...

Petition:

[139] 3rd preamble, *to ask for what I want; and here it will be to ask for **knowledge** of the deceits of the evil leader and **help** to guard myself from them, and knowledge of the true life that the supreme and true captain shows, and grace to imitate him.*

What do I want? Lord... I want to know how the devil thinks and how he wants me to think, and I want you to give me strength to free myself from his deceits.

In other words, we ask for grace to know and defend ourselves from the evil one, and to know and have the strength to follow Christ.

And I want, Lord, to know what You think, and how You want me to think, and I want Your Grace to live what You teach so that, putting it into practice, I may reach Salvation and begin to experience from now on, Your goodness, Your peace, Your joy... Your eternity.

POINTS TO GUIDE THE MEDITATION

Part I: The Standard of Satan
WHAT DOES THE DEVIL THINK AND HOW DOES HE ACT?

[140] **Point 1:** *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.*

That is, to imagine before me Satan in the most frightful way possible... why? How can God want me to think about this? Because, dear brothers, in reality, our imagination will never finish presenting or, better said, representing the true terrible and petrifying image of this abominable being... who, whether we like it or not, is around us wanting to devour us, as the Apostle St. Peter teaches. Hence in this meditation, fantasy or imagination can help us concentrate on "understanding" that this real, living, true, spiritual being is frightful and that from his malice and ugliness, an incalculable flow of evil ideas, evil thoughts and, worse yet, "evil principles," false principles that do not lead to life but to death, do not lead to peace but to instability, do not lead to light but to darkness, do not lead to Heaven of Eternal joy but to hell of eternal punishment, will spring forth and spring forth towards my person, towards my intelligence.

[141] **Point 2:** *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, no individual is overlooked.*

I must understand that this being **acts**. He acts with a **plan**. And in that plan is the calling of henchmen, demons and not only demons, persons who directly or indirectly act in his name. Directly with his voice and teachings and insinuations, or indirectly with his writings, recordings, works.

And he sends them **everywhere**. There is no place on this earth or, where the human being is present, also in spaceships! where the Devil does not send his henchmen to sow evil. To every person, to every family, to every society and nation, to every state of persons, to children, to adolescents, to young people, to adults, to the elderly, to celibates and to married people, to religious and consecrated persons, to priests and laity, to every place. No one is free from the action of the devil.

This means, the devil is seeking **me** as well.

[142] **Point 3:** *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.*

This is the essence of this first part of the meditation, the devil wants me to:

1. Be COVETOUS.
2. To love VAINGLORY.
3. And to be PROUD and, from there, to make me fall into any vice. That is, into any bad, sinful habit.

It seems something... how to say it? Incredible that in our time one can think that the desire for goods, for riches, vainglory and even pride, can be considered as things of the devil and yet, today as yesterday it is with these that he tempts most. It works for him to tempt us with that. He makes us think that the more and more I have, the better... and then, when I have more, to "demand" that others recognize me, bow before me, give way to me, the place... and from there... to make a mortal leap to the SELF... to thinking always and in everything about myself, to seeking to be the center of my family, work, parish, society... even to seeking that God also bow before me! It is the first blasphemy in history when Satan pronounced that I WILL NOT SERVE YOU! Which he continues repeating through the ages of ages and wants us to think it, adopt it and repeat it... it is to make oneself a "god"... pride. That "disordered" love of oneself which very many times we disguise as "just rights," as "loving and respecting oneself" and many expressions that do nothing but hide that desire, will and firm thought of thinking that I and only I am the center of everything and everyone.

And from there, Satan with more efficiency will propose to me more vices, more sins, more disordered pleasures and unbecoming habits.

We must try to understand, that is, to comprehend even the details and in the concrete applications of our lives how Satan, **my** enemy, who seeks to destroy me and destroy my temporal and Eternal life, he... how does he work in me?, how does he go about directly or through his henchmen (evil angels or evil persons), or through his works (writings or images, etc.) to make me fall into these three steps?... Riches... Vainglory... Pride... and from there, to all sorts of vices.

Don Bosco said: "If we seek our own glory, discontent, division, and disorder will come" and also: "Do not trust much in your own strength; you can fall like St. Peter."

Part II: The Standard of Christ WHAT DOES JESUS CHRIST THINK AND HOW DOES HE ACT?

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

We must imagine Jesus, Christ the King, my Lord. With the image that most helps me to contemplate His goodness, His majesty, His innocent beauty, His Lordship. He is still present and calls me, He came to seek me.

[144] **Point 1:** *Consider Christ our Lord, standing in a lowly place in a great plain about the region of Jerusalem, His appearance beautiful and attractive.*

Perhaps I can imagine the Good Shepherd, the Friend, the Master... in that place as serene as it is beautiful. Where Jesus is, all is serene light, order, cleanliness, harmony, joy.

[145] **Point 2:** *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.*

Jesus not only chose His apostles and disciples 2000 years ago, but Jesus, who lives, LIVES! He continues choosing apostles, continues choosing disciples and sends them, everywhere, to all persons, to all societies, He sends His holy angels to inspire good actions, to eradicate evils, He

sends men and women of good will, consecrated persons, virgins, celibates, religious, laity, missionaries, priests, He calls them, forms them, encourages them and accompanies them in their mission. He calls and calls and will continue calling because He is faithful and to be with us until the end of the world.

[146] Point 3 *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.*

Jesus sends His servants and friends with a great motto "that they desire to **help all**," that is the heart of the apostle of Jesus Christ, that ardent desire to help everyone, not to circumscribe oneself to one state, one people, one language, one family, one class of persons, to concrete situations, that universality (catholicity) of effectively wanting to help everyone.

And **how** are they to help everyone? By trying to convince them (with reasons, not with deceits as the devil does!) to desire to be detached **from all goods**, to love God above all. That poverty of spirit that every man and woman of good will must have if they truly want to be pleasing to God, give Him glory and save their souls.

They must also promote the religious life. Yes! The profession of the evangelical Counsels, beginning with actual poverty. If that is what God wants of one, teaching people not to be afraid to leave everything, to leave the ships, work, family, other goods, to have that treasure in Heaven that Christ promises.

Then St. Ignatius reminds us that it is also necessary to teach to desire insults and contempt, this is perhaps the most feared thing. How is one to desire to suffer contempt? And yet, Jesus began His Sermon on the Mount by telling us that Blessed, happy, fortunate are the poor in spirit and He will end by saying and teaching all His disciples that Blessed, happy, fortunate are you if they insult you, hate you, persecute you for My sake and for the Gospel.

This will make the human being more like Jesus and, therefore, will make him humble. HUMILITY. That virtue that is as loved as it is combated. That sounds so beautiful and is so difficult to practice day by day.

This is the essence of the second part of the meditation, Jesus Christ wants me to:

1. Be POOR, in spirit or even effectively.
2. To desire INSULTS AND CONTEMPT.
3. And to be HUMBLE and from there that they make me ascend and practice any good act and all virtue.

St. Ignatius tells us that, from these three steps...Poverty... Contempt... Humility, one can ascend by the secure ladder of virtues towards holiness. There is no firm and true virtue if it is not founded



on humility. And there is no firm and stable humility if it is not founded on poverty, spiritual or effective, and on the desire to suffer for Jesus.

St. John Bosco says about humility, some maxims:

"If we possess the sciences without humility, we will never be children of God, but rather children of the one who is the father of pride: the demon."

"Think of God according to what faith dictates; of your neighbor, according to what charity inspires, of yourself, with humility. Speak of God always with veneration, of your neighbor, as you would wish they spoke of you, of your own person, speak with humility or better be silent."

"Rather than excusing your defects, strive to correct them."

"The virtue that should be inculcated in a particular way to students is humility; because a proud student is a poor ignoramus."

"The amiable and humble person will always be loved by all, by God and by men."

"A person of mediocre talent, but virtuous and humble, does much more good than a proud scholar."

"Purity is the reward of humility."

And **St. Mary of Jesus Crucified Baouardy** said:

"Holiness is not prayer, nor visions nor revelations, nor the science of speaking well, nor hairshirts, nor penances; it is Humility."

"The humble heart is the vessel, the Chalice that contains God."

"In hell there are all kinds of virtues, but humility does not exist. In heaven there are all kinds of defects, but pride does not exist."

Colloquy:

To enter into a dialogue, conversation, chat... respectful, kind, sincere, trusting... that is prayer in short, it is to lift the soul to God and converse with Him, about His mysteries or about our miseries and the needs of our brothers. We must try to learn to make good colloquies, it is not easy, but it is not impossible! It is a matter of asking God and the Virgin for the grace to speak with them always with confidence, as a friend speaks with a friend, or a servant with his master, or a sick person with a good and beloved doctor, or a child with his father, a child with another Child... a disciple with the Master... a lost man with the Good Shepherd...

We now enter one of the "great colloquies", the "triple colloquy":

[147] *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.*

2nd 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 (Anima Christi)*

SOUL OF CHRIST, SANCTIFY ME

BODY OF CHRIST, SAVE ME

BLOOD OF CHRIST, INEBRIATE ME

WATER FROM THE SIDE OF CHRIST, WASH ME



PASSION OF CHRIST, STRENGTHEN ME
O GOOD JESUS, HEAR ME
WITHIN THY WOUNDS HIDE ME
PERMIT ME NOT TO BE SEPARATED FROM THEE
FROM THE WICKED FOE DEFEND ME
AT THE HOUR OF MY DEATH CALL ME
AND BID ME COME TO THEE
THAT WITH THY SAINTS I MAY PRAISE THEE
FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

3rd colloquy. This will be to beg the Father to grant me the same graces. Then I will say the Our Father.

We should not be afraid to ask for these graces because of our great faith in the Lord Jesus who loves us.

In the colloquies we must try to ask and insist to God that He grant us the double grace proper to this meditation, namely:

1. That I may know the deceits of the devil and strength to guard myself from them.
2. And that I may know the true Life that Christ brings and Grace to receive it and follow it always.

For the colloquies it helps a lot to make "acts of the presence of God," that is, to be conscious that at every moment God is present and looks at me and speaks to me and loves me and listens to me, and corrects me, and encourages me. The exercise of the "Presence of God" is a good exercise for our daily life since, ultimately, very many times, it would be sufficient in our life to think that He is present and looks at me, so that I may not fall into sin.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary bless us.