



DAY #29: Meditation

THE THREE CLASSES OF MEN [149-157]

Today we find ourselves in the second of these three great meditations of the second week (*The Two Standards, The Three Classes of Men, and The Three Kinds of Humility*). While we always seek to give ourselves entirely to the Lord in prayer, let us pray to the Holy Spirit with an intensified zeal, that we may know and **choose** what is best for the glory of God.

The meditation will follow our usual structure of:

1. Placing oneself in the presence of God (take a moment, and see how the Father beholds *you*)
2. Preparatory Prayer (beg God for grace to pray well)
3. History (we will consider the background of this kind of ‘parable’ that St. Ignatius gives us)
4. Composition of Place (the ‘mental image’ to help keep us in prayer, especially in distraction)
5. Petition (the ‘form’ of the meditation; the ‘what’ I’m asking for; the ‘fruit’ I hope to obtain)
6. The “Points” (proper to each meditation).
7. Colloquy
8. Examination of the Meditation (an essential part of the exercises!)

St. Ignatius begins this meditation with the following introduction:

[149] *This is a meditation for the same fourth day to choose that which is **better (the ‘best’)***

Note, that the Spanish is St. Ignatius for ‘better’ is *el mejor*, which could also be translated as the *best*. With that in mind, let us now go to the steps of our meditation.

INTRODUCTORY STEPS

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.*

We repeat constantly, but we can’t overlook this step! We are not doing a ‘psychological exercise’ or ‘following a system’. We are praying to our Heavenly Father who loves us and wants to help us. This is a dialogue, a dialogue of faith, and so we begin with this act of faith and trust in God.

Second, the PREPARATORY PRAYER: [46] – *The usual 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.*

PRELUDES

1 – **HISTORY** – [150]: *This is the history of the Three Classes of Men. Each of them has acquired ten thousand ducats [a ducat was a gold or silver coin used for trade back in the day], but not entirely as they should have, **for the love of God**. They all wish to **save their souls** and find peace in God our Lord by ridding themselves of the burden arising from the **attachment** to the sum acquired, which impedes the attainment of this end.*

These three “classes” *are not exclusive* to any particular state of life (lay, single, married, religious, priest, etc.). Rather, they represent three different levels of “volitional disposition” to sacrifice whatever is less than God and stands in the way of His more perfect service and Love (Hardon, 42). In other words, they levels of “spiritual detachment”.

2 – **COMPOSITION OF PLACE [151]:** *This is a mental representation of the place. Here it will be to behold myself standing in the **presence of God our Lord and of all His saints**, that I may know and desire what is more pleasing to His Divine Goodness.*

Note that this setting is the one that St. Ignatius only uses for the most important meditations; when there’s something truly significant, really essential, he says to place ourselves in the presence of God and all the saints. Fr. Calaveras notes that this composition of place has nothing really to do with the three classes of men, but rather everything to do with me, and my choices.

3 – **GRACE: [152] The petition: *This is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to beg for the **grace to choose what is more [the best] for the glory of His Divine Majesty** and the salvation of my soul.*

Note the emphasis on the **will**, “the grace to choose.” The point here is on the aspect of will, the choice. Let us also notice that we are asking for the grace to choose **the best**. It’s not about ‘not sinning’, but unconditionally seeking God’s will.

POINTS OF THE MEDITATION

Let us first read the text of St. Ignatius describing each of these “three classes” and then examination then one by one in more detail.

[153] The First Class: *They would like to rid themselves of the attachment they have to the sum acquired in order to find peace in God our Lord and assure their salvation, but the hour of death comes, and they have not made use of any means.*

[154] The Second Class: *They want to rid themselves of the attachment, but they wish to do so in such a way that they **retain what they have acquired**, so that God is to come to what they desire, and they do not decide to give up the sum of money in order to go to God, though this would be the better way for them.*

[155] The Third Class: *These want to rid themselves of the attachment, but they wish to do so in such a way that they desire neither to retain nor to relinquish the sum acquired. They seek only to will and not will as God our Lord inspires them, and as seems better for the service and praise of the Divine Majesty. Meanwhile, they will **strive to conduct themselves as if every attachment to it had been broken**. They will **make efforts** neither to want that, nor anything else, unless the service of God our Lord alone move them to do so. As a result, the desire to be better able to serve God our Lord will be the cause of their accepting anything or relinquishing it.*

All three of these groups – who have passed the Principle & Foundation – and realize they are “laboring under the difficulty of an inordinate affection for some creature”, (typified by a large sum of money; it could be ‘any attachment’). So they share an *attachment* that effects their will (an unreasonable affection for the object that they possess). So we are talking about two things: 1 – the

object of the attachment (e.g. money) and 2 – the *attachment* itself (i.e. the *disordered affection* for said object). They also are alike in that they **want** to get rid of it. The difference? The means.

In summary:

| | 1 st Class | 2 nd Class | 3 rd Class |
|---|--|---|---|
| Has 10,000 ducats? (<i>object</i> of attachment) | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Did not obtain for right reason? (pure love of God) | | Yes | Yes |
| Desires to save soul and find peace in God by ridding themselves of the burden of the attachment? | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Takes action to do so? | No | Yes | Yes |
| Willing to give up money? | n/a | No | Yes |
| Description | Lazy (never take concrete steps to do anything) | Lacking indifference; they want to both ‘have their way’ and God’s way. Still attached to things of world. | Indifferent. Seeks only the will of God whether it means to keep money or get rid of it. An authentically free person. |

Let’s now examine each of the classes in more detail.

[153] First Class (want to rid of the attachment but don’t do anything)

- Problem? **The “procrastinator”**. “I should”. “I will”. But they never do anything. Good intention...but never **in act**. That is, never **actualized**, they live in the world of possibility, of “could have”, of “someday”. But **now is the day of salvation**. (2 Cor 6:12b)
- This is the **Rich Young Man**. (f. Mt. 19, Mk 10) They are content with “not sinning”, but no more. They want to be freed from hell, but have no desire to break their will and seek God’s will alone. They see God as a competitor to their freedom.
- View of possessions? “I earned this”; “What if I need this?”
- This group acts from **fear** rather than from love.
- *The craving of the lazy person is fatal, for lazy hands refuse to labor*. (Prov 21:25)
- Why not? → **Sloth? Fear?** Weak will?
- Ask yourself this question: “What am I afraid of?” “What is keeping me from acting?”

[154] The Second Class: they want to rid the “internal impediment” but keep the “external object”

- Problem? They want God to conform to them.
- The “compromiser”. The “negotiator”. The “I want it all”. I want to serve God, to grow in virtue, by in “my way”. They are often agitated, because they are continually surprised that God is not acting according to their preferred method (i.e. ‘this cross’ is not opportune).
- “They will labor as much as your please, but in such things only as they **like**; they will obey others, in such matters as are **conformable** to their **individual tastes** and their own judgement; they will practice humility in a certain way and to a certain extent, but they draw

the line at certain humilities and certain modes. They persuade themselves to do **some things**, but as they will not undertake to do **all** that God requires of them, they live a life of wretched mediocrity and fail miserably in the end. They do what is **most**, but neglect the **less**, and thus fail in perfection and in gaining merit.” (Fr. Clare, *The Spiritual Life*, 239)

- This is **Pontius Pilate**. He sees what He should do. He wants to have it all, to do God’s will but still keep the object of attachment. (I want the riches, but not the attachment).
- *I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot* (Rev 3:15)
- This person will “do things”, but is never “all in”. Every day is a new negotiation. They always want to “see” before the daily “leap of faith”.
- Lacking *generosity*. It doesn’t work this way → we have to give it up (law of gift); *Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.* (Jn 12:24)
- Lacks the spirit of sacrifice.
- Struggles with spiritual pride (cf. Jn 9) and trusting in one’s own judgment; of “knowing more than God”; this can be very dangerous.
- Am I here? Do I want God to conform to my will?

[155] The Third Class: Desire to rid self of attachment, and works with indifference (open to keeping money or getting rid of, they only seek what God wants).

- They have signed the blank check to God. They allow Him to fill in the amount.
- Generous. Detached.
- They are running to serve God. *See, God, I have come to do your will, O God* (Heb 10:7; Ps 40:8)
- They work as if they had no attachment, which helps to rid oneself of it. *The act arouses the feeling...: such is the **psychological law**. The rule of conduct that follows from this is that, in order to acquire the feeling that is desired, it is necessary to **act as if one had already had it** [the feeling].* (El Gobierno de si mismo, Antonio Eymieu, SJ, p. 54)
- Sacrifice. Selflessness. NO DELAY. They live the principle and foundation with no hesitation.
- Samuel “*speak Lord, your servant is listening.*” (1 Sam 3:10)
- They want to be “healed at any cost”. Their principle of decision is only what God wants. The only struggle they have is *finding God’s will*; once clear to them they follow with total disregard to themselves.
- Here is a true freedom, the true joy of the Gospel, that allows one to *rejoice alays*. (Phil 4:4)
- They have one Master.
- We should pray earnestly for the grace to be admitted to this class, and resolve to work, to strive as if already in it.

Having seen each of the three classes or “states of will” in more detail, we can begin to examine ourselves a bit more closely to see where we are.

What are **signs of attachment**? Let’s follow some notes from Fr. John Hardon, S.J.:

If the **object occupies my mind at times that should be free of such pre-occupation**, like prayer or necessary duties; or if the amount of attention I give to the person, place, or thing is out of

proportion to its objective value and importance. The standard hierarchy of values: supernatural, spiritual, intellectual and material may be applied here. So that if, for example, I am more concerned with an intellectual project than with my spiritual obligations to the evident detriment of the latter, I ought to suspect undue affection for the former.

If I find myself **habitually taking complacency in some possession**, to the point where I tend to condemn or pity others for lacking what I have, this is a sign of inordinate self-love.

If I often **lose peace of mind** from definable or undefinable causes, on account of what I have or do, I am too attached to the object, person, or practice, since ordinate affection, being orderly, produces tranquility of mind which is the essence of peace.

If I am always **afraid of losing** or being hindered in the use of some gift or possession, or if I feel dissatisfied with what I have, whether its amount, quality or perfection, I am too enamored of the object because the right kind of affection precludes such anxiety.

If I regularly **talk** about my achievement along certain lines or advertise what I have for no better reason than the pleasure I get from being recognized, this is a sign of disorder in the appetitive faculties.

If I am inclined to **envy** others for some kind of talent, production, or property which I feel outshines or obscures my own, this is a danger signal pointing to the need for greater self-control.

If I tend to be **jealous** of what I have, slow to share it with others or fearful that others may acquire the same, I am overly in love with the creature, no matter how lawfully acquired or how holy the thing may be in itself.

(Hardon, *All My Liberty*, 44)

Note: we can't seek the problem in the object; but in **me**, as others can have this with no problems.

Note 2: we aren't talking about so much overcoming "obstacles for mortal sin"; we are talking about overcoming defects that prevent us from showing "extraordinary love and rendering signal service to the Divine Majesty).

COLLOQUY (CONVERSATION)

[156] *Threefold Colloquy:* *I will make use of the same three colloquies employed in the preceding contemplation on Two Standards (cf. 147)*

[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 there by, 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.*

Second 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, embolden me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds hide me.*

*Never permit me to be parted from you.
From the evil Enemy defend me.
At the hour of my death call me
and bid me come to you,
that with your Saints I may praise you
for ever and ever.
Amen.*

Third Colloquy: *This will be to beg the Father to grant me the same graces. Then I will say the Our Father.*

St. Ignatius gives us this very important note:

[157] Note: *It should be noted that when we feel an **attachment** opposed to actual poverty or a repugnance to it, when we are not indifferent to poverty and riches, it will be very helpful in order to overcome the inordinate attachment, even though corrupt nature rebel against it, **to beg our Lord in the colloquies to choose us to serve Him in actual poverty**. We should insist that we desire it, beg for it, plead for it, provided, of course, that it be for the service and praise of the Divine Goodness. (agere a contra)*

A few closing thoughts:

- This is a very important note. The frame of mind is critical in the exercises.
- “What makes it so important is that ordinarily we feel especial repugnance against the very thing that God seeks from us.” (Fr. Clare, *The Spiritual Life*); think of Moses, or Jonah, or Peter, both at the moment of denials and later on his way of leaving Rome. Think of St. Philip Neri, who sought to go to India, not initially to start oratories.
- It is often in these meditations where we come face to face with **reality**. I have a desire to overcome myself and my attachments, to follow God. I am ready to give my all. But now God reveals what this sacrifice entails. This is the moment where God asks for Isaac, He asks for my “everything”. Pray for the grace to go on, to be **resolute**, to be **firm** in our desire. When we are repulsed by what it seems God is asking, we ought to beg for this grace. Remember, “*I must decrease.*” (Jn 3:30) “*The grain of wheat must die.*” (Jn 12:24) “*We must strip off the old man.*” (Eph 4:22). “*The alabaster jar ought to be broken.*” (Mt 26) There is no freedom of spirit without this death of seeking one’s will over God’s.
- Give it to the Lord, and be amazed what He can do in your soul.
- We are close to the time of making our Reform, real concrete resolutions. *I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.* (Phil 1:6)
- Now is the time to take up the cross and follow our Lord (cf. Mt 16:24).
- Let us consider the words of St. John Vianney: *To suffer lovingly is to suffer no longer. To flee from the cross is to be crushed beneath its weight. We should pray for a love of the cross – then it will become sweet. I experienced it myself during four or five years... Oh! I did have crosses, almost more than I could bear. Then I started praying for a **love of crosses** and I felt **happy**. Verily there is **no happiness** but in the **cross**” “*Surely it is the cross that bestows it [inward peace] on our hearts. All our miseries come from not loving it?*” (Abbé François Trochu, *The Curé of Ars*, 178)*

May God bless you.