



DAY #11: Conference

PENANCE (& OTHER ADDITIONS) [73-90]

Intro

Welcome to day 11 of the online spiritual exercises!

Having spent a few days meditating on Estrangement from God (sin), and again on the Discernment of Spirits, let us now consider what St. Ignatius calls the "Additions" (1st part of the Conference), primarily by focusing on **Penance** (2nd part)

Hail Mary...Glory Be...Our Lady...St. Ignatius...pray for us.

Part I – The Additions

Note: These "Additions" are not addressed much in the actual recorded Conference, but are provided here as a reference. If you want to follow along the main points of this Conference, then you can skip ahead to "Part II - Penance" on page 5.

[73] ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS FOR BETTER MAKING THE EXERCISES AND FOR BETTER FINDING WHAT ONE DESIRES.

What is an "addition"? It means "something added," therefore, it is something added to another principal thing.

Commonly, they are **additions to prayer** (to what we properly call the "**exercise**"), such as the first five; but St. Ignatius gives them a broader scope: "**Additions for better making the Exercises and for better finding what one desires.**" Additions to keep that sacred fire burning, which is nothing other than that noble desire to advance as much as possible, in accordance with what "I want and desire" (cf. [48]), that is, the fruit or goal of the Exercises. These additions remind us of this permanently.

With the word "**Additions,**" then, St. Ignatius heads a series of ten directions to which he attributes great importance, for he wants a particular examination to be kept on them [90]. Directions that have variants for each week, and that look entirely to the activity or progress of the Exercises and that are also very similar to the introductory "Annotations" (the first numbers of the book). We have already commented on those notes and also on some of the additions corresponding to this first week; now we will comment on the remaining ones.

When St. Ignatius speaks of the causes of desolation, he says:

*"The first is because we have been **tepid** and **slothful** or **negligent** in our exercises of piety, and so through our own fault spiritual consolation has been taken away from us."* [322; on why we suffer from desolation]

In this same first week, St. Ignatius has given us some **"additions for better making the exercises and for better finding what one desires"** [73]. The **"better making"** and the **"better finding"** is the opposite of **"being tepid, lazy, or negligent in our spiritual exercises"**; consequently, the first cause of finding ourselves desolate is our tepidity, laziness, or negligence in fulfilling the additions with the breadth and intensity that St. Ignatius intended.

Let us not forget either that essential disposition with which we should begin and continue the Exercises, namely **"desiring in all possible ways to profit"** [20]."¹ (Casanovas²)

That is why Casanovas himself will say of the Additions, that they are an **"extremely important document on whose observance the fruit of the Exercises largely depends."**

Everything we say here must be adapted to the reality of these Exercises in **daily life** and **online**; the important thing is that each one examine what he can do/apply in his life and be faithful to that.

2. ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS: 1 TO 9 [SE 73-81]

[73] 1st Addition. *After retiring, just before falling asleep, for the space of a Hail Mary, I will think of the hour when I have to rise, and why I am rising, and briefly sum up the exercise I have to go through.*

This can be very helpful, especially if we are watching or listening to the Point for Meditation or Conference at night with plans to pray the following morning. Either way, it is very helpful to try and keep a general sense of attention to the Spiritual Exercises I am taking.

[74] 2nd Addition. *The 2nd: when I wake up, I will **not permit my thoughts to roam at random**, but will turn my mind at once to the subject I am about to contemplate in the first exercise at midnight [the 1st meditation]. I will seek to rouse myself to shame for my many sins by using examples, let us say, of a knight brought before his king and the whole court, filled with shame and confusion for having grievously offended his lord from whom he had formerly received many gifts and favors. Similarly, in the Second Exercise, I will consider myself a great sinner, loaded with chains, that is, I will look upon myself as bound with fetters, going to appear before the supreme and eternal Judge, and I will recall the way prisoners, bound and deserving of death, appear before an earthly judge. As I dress, I will think over these thoughts or others in keeping with the subject matter of the meditation.*

[75] 3rd Addition. *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.*

This is an important step in every meditation. We aren't going through a kind of psychological process; we are **praying**, and we need to recall this, particularly before entering into the meditation.

[76] 4th Addition. *I will enter upon the meditation, now kneeling, now prostrate upon the ground, now lying face upwards, now seated, now standing, always being intent on seeking what I desire. Hence, two things should be noted:*

1. *If I find what I desire while kneeling, I will not seek to change my position: if prostrate, I will observe the same direction, etc.*
2. *I will remain quietly meditating upon the point in which I have found what I desire, without any eagerness to go on till I have been satisfied.*

This is pretty straightforward – the **best physical position** in prayer is the one that **helps us to pray**.

[77] 5th Addition. *After an exercise is finished, either sitting or walking, I will consider for the space of a **quarter of an hour** how I succeeded in the meditation or contemplation. If poorly, I will seek the cause of the failure; and after I have found it, I will be sorry, so that I may do better in the future. If I have succeeded, I will give thanks to God our Lord, and the next time try to follow the same method.*

It may be more difficult in this style of Spiritual Exercises to do so, but St. Ignatius is very adamant on the importance of continual examination. Why? It is all meant to help us maintain a constant sense of recollection.

[78] 6th Addition. *I should not think of things that give pleasure and joy, as the glory of heaven, the Resurrection, etc., for if I wish to feel pain, sorrow, and tears for my sins, every consideration promoting joy and happiness will impede it. I should rather keep in mind that I want to be sorry and feel pain. Hence it would be better to call to mind death and judgment.*

What is said in this addition clearly shows that the directions we are commenting on are neither directed immediately to prayer, nor do they belong to it exclusively, as is often said or supposed; but rather they are directed **to all the Exercises** and in a special way to the fruit we intend to draw from them; or as St. Ignatius says in the title: **"to better find what one desires"** [73]

Its object is that the peculiar end assigned to the point of the Exercises in which we now find ourselves may occupy our *understanding totally*. If the mind does not give itself fully to these things, because it has not penetrated them as it should, the will must intervene with its command so that it may want to remember and **ruminates on them** with that slow action which makes us assimilate them.

Perhaps the fulfillment of this direction will be **difficult** for us due to natural tiredness or dryness of spirit. Let us not be surprised by this. This is the point and hour of that **"wanting"** (desiring) so proper to the Ignatian system, which with persevering and deliberate energy imposes itself on all the acts of the person and makes them serve its purposes.

This in no way contradicts the peace we must always seek and God wants us to have; nor that joy which our faith gives us and which out of charity we must always show and give to our neighbor⁵. Even so, on these days of the first week, it is **fitting** to have our thoughts more focused on what we are meditating. Something similar to what we should strive for on Good Friday: everything ordered to grieving over the **death of the Lord** which we remember and relive.

[79] **7th Addition.** *For the same reason I should deprive myself of all light, closing the shutters and doors when I am in my room, except when I need light to say prayers, to read, or to eat.*

"For the same effect," that is, "to find what one desires," for the end sought in each week of the Exercises.

In the matter dealt with in the present addition, one's own personality or condition has more entry, due to the mysterious link between **sensible** and **spiritual** things; that is why the Saint leaves it all to the discretion of the exercitant: "**as much as he feels that it can profit and help him**" [cf. 130, changes to directions week 2]; "insofar as the soul thinks or conjectures it can help" [cf. 229, changes to directions week 4].

Here, nothing of superstition or routine, nothing of sensual or sensible slackening; but perpetually the same criterion and determination to put the means that the end demands, within, of course, the possibilities given by the adaptation of these exercises we are undertaking.

The addition tends to create in us, little by little, the **habit of knowing** how to make the **natural** things that surround us speak a spiritual language: a truly difficult science, which some possess as a natural gift, and which the Saints acquire with the help of supernatural grace, in a higher and more perfect way. Never as in the *Exercises* is the soul so well disposed for a work like this.

[80] **8th Addition.** *I should not laugh or say anything that would cause laughter.*

He wants the Exercises to be clothed with an **external seriousness**.

The perfect education of feelings is certainly a difficult thing, but it is **very necessary**, and to achieve it there are two procedures: one **internal** and one **external**.

- The **internal** one seeks to base those feelings on great ideas and equally great loves that serve as healthy nourishment.
- The external one attends to regulating and correcting the **disordered manifestations** with which internal feelings show themselves outwardly; and although it does not reach, not even remotely, the efficacy of the internal procedure, it is sometimes of great utility.

This second is the one St. Ignatius puts into our hands with this eighth addition.

[81] **9th Addition.** *I should restrain my eyes except to look up in receiving or dismissing one with whom I have to speak.*

"**I am guarding these walls for the love of Jesus Christ"** (St. Macarius, desert father)

Its object is to restrain the sight, which among all the external senses is the most spiritual.

The following direction will deal with the material senses.

Here too the seventh addition applies, for if light can be an aid on days of spiritual joy, looking at and contemplating the sky and other good things that lift the spirit may also console us. Apart from



these things, it is most useful to close the eyes to whatever may cause distractions, so that the soul may concentrate all its energies on the great business of the Exercises.

This "**rigor**" of St. Ignatius in restraining the sight seems to indicate that besides the most perfect modesty, the Saint seeks mortification. Modesty is to turn the sight away from whatever may disturb the spirit; mortification is to forbid it to look at what could be seen without any inconvenience.

Part II - Penance

Today's Conference is primarily based on the following points.

3. PENANCE – 10TH ADDITION⁷

Today we are going to consider the topic of penance and mortification. There are many in today's day and age who frown upon penance as something of "an older era". Movies often portray Catholicism as a miserable life, obsessed with fasting, abstinence, discipline, etc. On the other hand, there are some who elevate the practice of penance to the level of holiness, in that more penance is more holiness. Inspired by the examples of St. John Vianney and St. John the Baptist, they desire to go on the intense fasts and brutal disciplines. So, what exactly is **penance**? Why do we do it? And how do we do it? What are some mistakes we should avoid when doing it? That will be the focus of this conference.

First, we can consider the **biblical roots** of penance. There are many examples of this in the **Old Testament**:

The People of Nin'evah: *And the people of Nin'evah believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them...[no one, man or beast, to eat or drink, etc.] When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which He said He would do to them; and He did not do it.* (Jon 3:5, 7, 8, 10)

Josiah heard the law and repents: *because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord...and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the Lord.* (2 Kgs 22:19)

Daniel the prophet: *Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking Him by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.* (Dan 9:3)

*There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage,³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but **worshiped** night and day with **fasting** and **prayer**.* (Lk 2:36-37)

We could go on and on (1 Kgs 21:27-29 (Ahab); Ps 69:7-11; Is 22:12-14; Joel 1:13-14)

Christ our Lord practiced penance as well, although He didn't have the same need as us, He desired to show us an example. Consider the 40 days without food and water in the desert (cf. Mt 4). Recall

how the disciples were hungry and rubbed the husks together for food; would not our Lord have also been hungry at this moment?

To understand penance, we have to go back to the garden. When sin entered the world, so did **sinful tendencies**, otherwise known as “**concupiscence**”. Our senses were no longer subject to reason, and their desires became disordered. Our passions are somewhat like the soldiers in the military, or the crew on a ship; we know that without discipline and order, without a clear plan, each will seek its own good and not the good of the whole. Penance is about subjecting the “old man” as St. Paul says very clearly, “*but I pummel (discipline) my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.* (1 Cor 9:27)

It's understandable why the modern world rejects penance – it rejects original sin! But we who know this by faith understand that penance is a part of our spiritual life, it is a mean, a way to help us. We should not make the mean the end, but we shouldn't ignore the need for the mean. St. Ignatius – a soldier, and one whose conversion occurred later in life – had an experimental knowledge of this reality, and hence includes several specific directions regarding penance.

So, as a kind of summary: **why do we need to do penance?** Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange gives 4 reasons for mortification:

- 1 – the consequences of original sin (concupiscence, sinful tendencies)
- 2 – the result of our own personal sins (reparation)
- 3 – the infinite elevation of our supernatural end (we must “die” to this earth)
- 4 – we must imitate our crucified Lord

Now, back St. Ignatius of Loyola:

[82] 10th Addition. *The tenth Additional Direction deals with penance. This is divided into **interior** and **exterior** penance. Interior penance consists in sorrow for one's sins and a firm purpose not to commit them or any others. Exterior penance is the fruit of the first kind. It consists in inflicting punishment on ourselves for the sins we have committed.*

So let us now examine penance as described by St. Ignatius, first by looking at interior penance and then exterior (a fruit of the interior) and its various forms (particularly in eating, sleep, and corporal discipline).

(1) Internal Penance: *Interior penance consists in sorrow for one's sins and a firm purpose not to commit them or any others*

This interior penance can never be lacking, otherwise there is no true Christian life.

It consists in sorrow for the sins committed in one's past life. It is what the one who has the consciousness of being a sinner has, as the great saints had: Mary Magdalene, St. Peter after the

denials, St. Augustine, etc. We are all great sinners, but our sorrow must not be sterile; we must grieve with a firm purpose of not falling again **into sin**. Otherwise, the only thing we achieve is to harden our heart.

"Conscience (...) It is also the source of **remorse**: man suffers interiorly because of the evil he has committed. Is not this suffering, as it were, a distant echo of that "**repentance** at having created man" which in anthropomorphic language the Sacred Book attributes to God? Is it not an echo of that "**reprobation**" which is interiorized in the "heart" of the Trinity and by virtue of the eternal love is translated into the suffering of the Cross, into Christ's obedience unto death? When the **Spirit of truth** permits the human conscience to **share** in that **suffering**, the **suffering of the conscience** becomes **particularly profound**, but also particularly **salvific**. Then, by means of an act of perfect contrition, the authentic conversion of the heart is accomplished: this is the evangelical "**metanoia**"." (St. John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem* 45)

(2) External Penance: It is the punishment for sins committed. *It is the fruit of the first kind of penance.* He who has truly understood that he is a sinner, will experience the need to do penance.

"He who holds bodily mortifications in little esteem under the pretext that interior ones are much more perfect, shows quite clearly that he is mortified neither interiorly nor exteriorly." (St. Vincent de Paul as cited in Royo Marín, *Teología de la perfección Cristiana*, BAC, p. 257)

Furthermore, external penance is not only the fruit of the internal one, but it is also a spur to the internal one since it opens our eyes more and more. They are reciprocal causes, although always there is one prior (the internal) and the other subsequent. External penance must always go with the internal one, so that the external one is not a purely material act, but a human act, integrally human and also supernatural.

Modern life, which preaches that one must **flee from all discomfort** as if it were a **disease**, does not understand penance. "... *If at any time anyone, be he a prelate or anyone else, persuades you of some doctrine of laxity, even if he confirms it with miracles, do not believe or embrace it; but more penance and more detachment from all things; and do not seek Christ without the Cross.*"¹¹ (St. John of the Cross).

*"He who seeks God, wanting to continue with his own tastes, seeks Him by night; and by night, he will not find Him. He, on the other hand, who seeks Him through good works and the exercise of virtue, leaving the bed of his tastes and pleasures, seeks Him by day and then finds Him, because what is not found by night is discovered by day."*¹² (St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, 3:1)

4. TYPES OF EXTERNAL PENANCES

Regarding Eating

[83] 1st Manner. *The first kind of exterior penance concerns **eating**. In this matter, if we do away with what is superfluous, it is not penance, but temperance. We do penance when we deny ourselves something of what is suitable for us. The more we do this, the better the penance, provided only we do no harm to ourselves and do not cause any serious illness.*

"When you fast, do not look dismal..." (Mt 6:16).

Fasting has accompanied the life of the Church and the saints, with very few exceptions and for reasons of health or the like, they have practiced it generously.

It is known that St. John Paul II fasted, and with extreme rigor, especially during Lent, a period in which he reduced food to a single complete meal a day. He also abstained from eating before conferring priestly and episcopal ordinations. On one occasion, Archbishop Cafarra was invited to lunch with John Paul II. When he arrived, some nuns who attend to the domestic work in the papal palace commented to him that the Pope lost more than 10 kilos each Lent due to the fasts and penances he did. The worried religious asked Archbishop Cafarra to say something to the Pope to encourage him to eat more. So, while they were still eating, Archbishop Cafarra says to the Pope: Your Holiness, I see that you have eaten little and in fact *it is evident that you have lost quite a bit of weight during this time. It is necessary for you to eat more, the world needs a strong Pope.*" And right then and there the Pope, pounding the table with his hand, replied: *The world does not need a strong Pope, the world needs a **holy** Pope!*

Regarding Sleeping

[84] 2nd Manner. *The second kind of exterior penance concerns **sleep**. Here, too, it is not penance when we do away with the superfluous in what is pampering and soft. But it is penance when in our manner of sleeping we take something away from what is suitable. The more we do in this line, the better it is, provided we do not cause any harm to ourselves, and do not bring on any notable illness. But we should not deny ourselves a suitable amount of sleep, except to come to a happy mean in case we had the habit of sleeping too much.*

St. Teresa did not give herself to sleep without placing a piece of wood where she slept.

The postulator of the cause for canonization for St. John Paul II recounts:

"And often he spent the **night lying on the floor**. The housekeeper he had in Krakow noticed it, despite the fact that the archbishop would undo the bed to conceal it."⁸

Inflicting Sensible Pain on the Flesh

[85] 3rd Manner. *The third kind of penance is to chastise the body, that is, to inflict sensible pain on it. This is done by wearing hairshirts, cords, or iron chains on the body, or by scourging or wounding oneself, and by other kinds of austerities*

[86] *The more suitable and safe form of penance seems to be that which would cause sensible pain to the body and not penetrate to the bones, so that it inflicts pain, but does not cause sickness. For this reason it would seem more suitable to chastise oneself with light cords that cause superficial pain, rather than in any other way that might bring about a serious internal infirmity.*

This kind of penance should only be practiced under the guidance of a spiritual director. It could very easily fall into a kind of pride or other disorder if done on one's own. It's worth noting that the Venerable Fulton Sheen noted that in our day in age there is less need for this kind of penance than in other eras. He says that our neighbors are our hairshirts. In other words, we can benefit greatly by practicing the little virtues regarding the annoyances of each other, perhaps much more than a kind of corporal punishment as this one.

5. REASONS FOR DOING PENANCE

Satisfaction for Sins

[87] **1st Note.** The first note is that external penances are done mainly for three effects:

*the first, for **satisfaction** of past sins;*

Reparation to the Heart of Jesus and to divine justice; like someone who, if he offends a loved one gravely, although afterwards, when asking forgiveness, he forgives him from the heart, will do everything possible to show his repentance, lavishing acts of charity. Likewise, if a person, angry with a friend, inflicts material damage on him, although later he forgives him, he will do everything possible to make restitution. In this sense, penance together with almsgiving (works of mercy in general) and prayer, are the works that allow us to be "up to date" so that, when we die, we can go to Heaven directly without passing through purgatory.

To Conquer Ourselves

2nd, to overcome oneself, that is, to make our sensual nature obey reason, and to bring all of our lower faculties into greater subjection to the higher;

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt 16:24)

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many." (Mt 7:13)

The Catechism of the Church, speaking of chastity—but it applies to all passions—affirms:

*"The alternative is clear: either man **governs his passions and finds peace**, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy (cf. Sir 1:22)" (CCC 2339).*



What happens if we do not mortify ourselves, if we are not self-denying? What happens, besides often sinning, is that we cannot do the will of God.

"The life and spiritual doctrine of St. Ignatius can very well be condensed in this formula which contains the two elements contained in the goal of the Exercises and in that of the Elections: **continuous mortification to arrive at continuous union with the will of God.**"
(Casanovas)

To Obtain Some Grace

3rd *To obtain some grace or gift that one earnestly desires. Thus it may be that one wants a deep sorrow for sin, or tears, either because of his sins or because of the pains and sufferings of Christ our Lord; or he may want the solution of some doubt that is in his mind*

Explanatory Note:

[89] **3rd Note.** *When the exercitant has not found what he has been seeking, for example, tears, consolation, etc., it is often useful to make some change in the kind of penance, such as in food, in sleep, or in other ways of doing penance, so that we alternate, for two or three days doing penance, and for two or three not doing any. The reason for this is that more penance is better for some and less for others. Another reason is that we often quit doing penance, because we are too much concerned about our bodies and erroneously judge that human nature cannot bear it without notable illness. On the other hand, at times we may do too much penance, thinking that the body can stand it. Now since God our Lord knows our nature infinitely better, when we make changes of this kind, He often grants each one the grace to understand what is suitable for him.*

[90] **4th Note.** *The Particular Examination of Conscience will be made to remove faults and negligences with regard to the Exercises and the Additional Directions. This will also be observed in the Second, Third, and Fourth Week.*

As a kind of summary, we can say that penance is a necessary part of the spiritual life. We are in a spiritual combat, and our flesh often rebels against us. The testimony of Holy Scripture and the saints is clear. Our human nature has not changed and will also need to be disciplined, as St. Paul so clearly says: "*but I pummel (discipline) my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified*" (1 Cor 9:27).

If you have any questions on this or any other topic, do not hesitate to contact us with your question.

May God bless you.