



Day 8: MEDITATION ON THE THREE SINS [45]

Meditation Day 8 [45] - We officially begin with the 1st week of the Exercises...why now, if we already did P&F and had conferences?

P&F was something to be meditated on for several days, and then once that was incorporated they would officially commence.

Fr. La Palma, called *the Prince of the Commentators of the Spiritual Exercises*, speaks thus about **resolutions**:

Resolutions

“A resolution is a firm and constant determination in things arduous and difficult; for in what is easy or pleasing there is no need to propose anything: it suffices to let oneself be carried by the current of circumstance, of one’s taste, and of natural inclination.”

“To the resolution there must follow the effective command of the will, bringing it to execution; and this is the greatest fruit of the Spiritual Exercise, and to this the one who desires to profit should look. This is what our holy Father guides us toward in the colloquy of the first exercise of the First Week, where he says: *‘Likewise, looking at myself: what have I done for Christ? what am I doing for Christ? what ought I to do for Christ?’* [53]. And in the sixth point of the first contemplation of the Third Week: *‘Sixth: to consider how Christ suffers all this for my sins’* [197], and *‘What should I do and suffer for Him?’*”

“In these words it is clear that all the discourse of the understanding tends toward proposing, and the resolution toward the execution of what I ought to do and to suffer.”

Regarding what Saint Ignatius gives us to put resolutions into practice, Fr. La Palma continues:

“To aid the execution, the Particular Examination was ordained.” (21)

Fourth Note [90]:

“The Particular Examination is to be made to remove defects and negligences concerning the exercises and the additions; and so in the Second, Third, and Fourth Week likewise.”

“For the more one binds himself to God our Lord and shows himself more generous with His Divine Majesty, the more will he find God generous with him; and he will be more disposed to receive day by day greater graces and spiritual gifts,” as our Father says in the Constitutions. (22)



Considering Sin

It is very important in the spiritual life to arrive at a true **sense of sin**.

“Conversion requires the conviction of sin” (Saint John Paul II). (23)

John Paul II added: “To restore the right sense of sin is the first way of confronting the grave spiritual crisis that affects the man of our time.” (24)

He recalled the earlier words of Pius XII, spoken fifty years before: “*The sin of this century is the loss of the sense of sin.*” Even more true in our age.

Beginning of the First Week

Fr. La Palma teaches that there are **five ends** we must attain in this First Week: (25)

1. **First:** To recognize one’s ultimate end and resolve to employ all possible means to attain it, insofar as it lies in our power. (*Seen in Principle and Foundation.*)
2. **Second:** To recognize one’s past errors by which one has strayed from that end, and to repent of them with true penitence.
3. **Third:** To propose firmly one’s amendment, exercising oneself so as to become superior to one’s enemies, and to enter into hope of gaining victory over them.
4. **Fourth:** To remove all occasions that might lead us into new falls.
5. **Fifth:** To root in our hearts the fear of divine justice, serving as a bridle that keeps us from falling again into other sins.

The Three Sins

Saint Alberto Hurtado writes that sin is so terrible that, if God were not God, sin would take His place. It is the mortal enemy of the Thrice-Holy. For this reason we must ask the Holy Spirit for light to understand this mystery.

First Exercise [45]:

A meditation, using the three powers, on the **first**, **second**, and **third sin**.

It contains, after the preparatory prayer and two preludes, **three principal points and a colloquy**.

The three powers: memory, understanding, and will.

Placing Oneself in God's Presence

Preparatory Prayer

[46] “The preparatory prayer is to ask grace of God our Lord, that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be purely ordered to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty.”

Composition of Place

First Prelude [47]: Composition, seeing the place.

In visible contemplation (e.g., contemplating Christ our Lord, who is visible) this means seeing with the imagination the bodily place where the mystery occurs: a temple, a mountain, the setting where Christ or Our Lady is found.

But in invisible contemplation — as here, on sins — the composition is to imagine my soul imprisoned in this corruptible body, and the whole composite of body and soul dwelling in this valley of exile, among brute beasts, as one cast out.

Scripture passages to illuminate this composition:

“—A corruptible body burdens the soul, and this earthly tent weighs down the mind full of concerns.” (Wis 9:15)

“—With many other words he exhorted them, saying: ‘Save yourselves from this perverse generation.’” (Acts 2:40)

Petition

Second Prelude [48]: To ask God our Lord for what I desire.

The petition must match the matter:

- in the Resurrection: to rejoice with the Risen Christ;
- in the Passion: to ask for sorrow, tears, and suffering with Christ suffering.

Here the petition is: **to ask for shame and confusion before myself**, seeing how many have been lost by a single mortal sin, and how often I have deserved eternal condemnation for my many sins.

Saint Rafael Arnáiz writes:

“Whenever I place myself before You, O Lord, my first feelings are of shame. Lord, You know why. But afterward, O God — how good You are! — after seeing myself, I see You, and then, contemplating **Your mercy that does not reject me**, my soul is consoled and becomes happy.” (26)

BODY OF THE MEDITATION

1. The Sin of the Angels

First Point [50]:

Bring to memory the first sin — that of the angels. Then let the understanding consider it, and the will stir itself, all so as to be more ashamed and confounded, comparing my many sins with the single sin of the angels.

Where they, for one sin, were cast into hell, how many times have I deserved it for so many sins?

Recall how they were created in grace, yet not willing to use their freedom to reverence and obey their Creator. Their pride turned their grace into malice, and they were cast from Heaven into Hell. Then continue, with understanding and will, to move the affections.

2. The Sin of Adam and Eve**Second Point [51]:**

Do the same regarding the sin of Adam and Eve. Recall how, for that sin, they endured long penance, and how great a corruption came upon the human race, many souls going to hell.

Recall the second sin of our first parents: Adam created in the field of Damascus, placed in the earthly paradise; Eve formed from his side; both forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge. They disobeyed, sinned, were clothed in skins, cast from paradise, and lived their whole life stripped of original justice, in toil and penance.

Then continue with understanding and will.

Consequence:

“After original sin we have of our own nothing but falsehood and sin.” (27)

3. The Sin of the One Who Sins Once or Fewer Times Than I**Third Point [52]:**

Consider those who for a single mortal sin have gone to hell, and others — countless — for fewer sins than I have committed.

Reflect on the gravity of sin against my Creator and Lord; how in offending Infinite Goodness one is justly condemned forever; and move the will accordingly.

This possibility is real — very real.

“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point becomes guilty of all.” (Jas 2:10)

One may fruitfully read the account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–9).

The Catechism teaches:

“Unless we freely choose to love Him, we cannot be united with God. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against Him, against our neighbor, or against ourselves.” (CCC 1033)

“The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. The souls of those who die in mortal sin descend immediately after death into hell, where they suffer its punishments, ‘the eternal fire.’” (CCC 1035)

Fr. La Palma gives motives for sorrow for sin:

1. Fear of the punishments.
2. Love of the reward.
3. The ugliness of sin itself.
4. Because sin is an offense against God, who must be supremely revered and loved. 28

Ask for the grace to be truly sorrowful for my sins.

To not be a “child of my time.”

To look upon the Cross and understand that *I* have crucified the Lord by my sins — not metaphorically, but truly.

I must see **my own hands** crucifying Him.

Colloquy

[54] “The colloquy is made as one friend speaks to another, or a servant to his lord: sometimes asking grace, sometimes accusing oneself of faults, sometimes speaking of one’s affairs and seeking counsel. Then say one *Our Father*.”

[53] Imagine Christ our Lord before you, placed upon the Cross.
Speak with Him: how He, the Creator, came to be made man; how He passed from eternal life to temporal death; how He died **for my sins**.

Then look at myself:

- What have I done for Christ?
- What am I doing for Christ?
- What ought I to do for Christ?

Seeing Him thus, hanging on the Cross, consider whatever arises.

He died for my sins, to save me.

He occupies **my** place on the Cross.

I deserve it.

What shall I do for Him?

How shall I repair?

Ask, ask, ask. We need light and strength from the Lord.

Later, in another meditation [63], Saint Ignatius gives a model of colloquy:

First Colloquy – to Our Lady

Ask her to obtain grace from her Son and Lord for **three things**:

1. To feel interior knowledge of my sins and hatred for them.
(Fr. Casanovas says this is the end of the First Week, adding: “and also to feel the special love Christ has had for us.”)
2. To feel the disorder of my actions, so that, hating it, I may amend and order my life.
3. To gain knowledge of the world, so that, hating it, I may drive far from me worldly and vain things.

Saint Ignatius also states in [4] that the end of the First Week is:
“contrition, sorrow, and tears for one’s sins.”

This we beg both for ourselves and for the thousands — blessed be God — who are making these Exercises.

If I do not repent of my sins, or if I think I have not sinned, I will not truly convert.

“If you do not do penance, you will all perish.”

And penance begins with sorrow for sin.

During the colloquy one must keep greater reverence toward the Lord.

[3] Since in all the Exercises we use acts of understanding (considering) and of the will (affecting), we must observe that when the will speaks — vocally or mentally — with God our Lord or His saints, greater reverence is required than when we merely understand something with the intellect.

We ask our Mother to obtain for us the grace of a fruitful First Week, to put into practice the means to gain all its fruits, and to repent truly.