

Intro to Discernment of Spirits - Part 2

Apostles of the Interior Life

The third rule: Consolation is an uplifting of the heart. The consolation is spiritual when it increases our love for God, our faith, our hope, our desire to serve Him and our neighbors.

The fourth rule: Desolation is a heaviness of the heart. It decreases our love for God, our desire to spend time in prayer, and to love our neighbors.

God never gives spiritual desolation. But He permits the enemy to give it to us. Sometimes it depends on our sins, and at other times it is permitted in order for us to grow in faith and in humility (**ninth rule**).

Desolation cannot harm us if we resist it.

TAKE ACTION

When an interior movement is from the evil spirit, reject it.

When an interior movement is from the Holy Spirit, accept it.

How do you reject desolation?

- First of all it is not wise to change a decision that we made in a time of consolation (**fifth rule**).
- We are called to increase prayer, penance, meditation, and do acts of trust in God (**sixth rule**).
- Through these we are reminded that God is always near us, and that desolation can work out for our good (**seventh rule**).
- Finally, we need to be patient and to believe that consolations will come back, sooner than we imagine (**eighth rule**).

How do we act in consolation?

- We are called to remember that desolation will come back, and start thinking now of how we will face it, so that when it comes we will be prepared (**tenth rule**).
- We are called to treasure consolation, to go back to it, to taste it, so that we can grow in love of God, and store up for difficult times.
- In times of consolation we need to remember that consolation is not given to us for our merits. It is a gift from God (**eleventh rule**).

It is of extreme importance that Discernment of Spirits is done in a relationship with a spiritual director, because it is easy to be deceived. **Discernment is never done alone.**

Developing a “spiritual sense”

There is a “greater discernment of spirits” (second set of rules in St. Ignatius of Loyola’s “Spiritual Exercises”) which involves the ability to identify when a spiritual consolation is authentically from God. **At this stage, the devil commonly tempts under the appearance of good because he knows that he cannot tempt us anymore with something that is obviously and blatantly evil.** We need to develop a spiritual sense.

The principle of discernment is simple: *“By their fruits you will recognize them. Do you gather grapes from thorns or figs from briars? So every good tree produces good fruits and every bad tree produces bad fruits”* (Mt 7:16-17).

This spiritual hearing is the ability to recognize, among the many and discordant voices that we hear in us, the unique and unmistakable voice of Jesus.

The Spirit speaks to each one with a tone of voice, a timbre that is indeed its own.

The devil, sometimes can imitate the voice of the Spouse. But if we are attuned to this goal, thanks to a loving familiarity and a pure and constant search for the divine will, we will easily distinguish his voice that, in a certain sense, will sound *out of tune* to us and that is therefore not the voice of Jesus.

The sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger instead they will not follow, but they will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of the stranger (10:4-5).

The enemy dresses up as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14) with the goal of infiltrating into the interior of the spiritual person.

The art of the truly spiritual person will now be that of discovering the deceptions of the enemy in order to grow in the spiritual life in a mature and responsible way.

The temptations are finalized to get the soul to abandon the road taken or get them to turn back to how they were before.

The knowledge of God, if it is real is transforming, changes the person because it is a relationship in which the Holy Spirit acts in the person and with the person.