

Adult VBS –Hearing God’s Voice and Praying with God’s Word
Fr. Chad VanHoose

3. Discernment of Spirits: Spiritual Consolation & Spiritual Desolation

- a. Discernment of Spirits – a spiritual activity in which a person becomes aware of interior spiritual movements, applies himself to understanding them (their source and their direction), and then takes the appropriate spiritual action in response to them by accepting the movements that are of God and rejecting those that are of the enemy.
- b. The Story of St. Ignatius
- c. Obstacles to Communion
 - i. What gets in the way in our relationship with the Lord?
 1. 2 spirits operating – good spirit and the bad spirit
 2. Rules for the Discernment of Spirits (The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola)
 - a. Introduction: Rules for becoming aware and understanding to some extent the different movements which are caused in the soul, the good, to receive them, and the bad to reject them.
 - i. 3 important steps:
 1. Become Aware
 2. Understand
 3. Take Action - relational choice with Christ - be with the one who loves us
 - b. Rules 1 & 2: pertain to two categories of persons
 - i. Rule 1
 1. The first Rule: In the persons who go from mortal sin to mortal sin, the enemy is commonly used to propose to them apparent pleasures, making them imagine sensual delights and pleasures in order to hold them more and make them grow in their vices and sins. In these persons the good spirit uses the opposite method, pricking them and biting their consciences through the process of reason.
 2. Bad spirit – encourages; Good spirit – discourages, disrupts
 - ii. Rule 2
 1. The second: In the persons who are going on intensely cleansing their sins and rising from good to better in the service of God our Lord, it is the method contrary to that in the first Rule, for then it is the way of the evil spirit to bite, sadden and put

obstacles, disquieting with false reasons, that one may not go on; and it is proper to the good to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and quiet, easing, and putting away all obstacles, that one may go on in well doing.

2. Bad spirit – discourages, disrupts; Good spirit - encourages
- c. Pray: Lord, show me how the enemy moves me out of relationship with you!
 - d. Spiritual Consolation and Spiritual Desolation: Rules 3 & 4
 - i. Rule 3
 1. The third is of Spiritual Consolation. I call it consolation when some interior movement in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord; and when it can in consequence love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but in the Creator of them all. Likewise, when it sheds tears that move to love of its Lord, whether out of sorrow for one's sins, or for the Passion of Christ our Lord, or because of other things directly connected with His service and praise. Finally, I call consolation every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, quieting it and giving it peace in its Creator and Lord.
 - ii. Rule 4
 1. The fourth is of Spiritual Desolation. I call desolation all the contrary of the third rule, such as darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to things low and earthly, the unquiet of different agitations and temptations, moving to want of confidence, without hope, without love, when one finds oneself all lazy, tepid, sad, and as if separated from his Creator and Lord. Because, as consolation is contrary to desolation, in the same way the thoughts which come from consolation are contrary to the thoughts which come from desolation.

- e. The enemy disquiets us w/ false reasoning
- f. Questions to ask:
 - i. What is true?
 - ii. How does the Lord never speak?
 - iii. Lord, does this matter?
 - iv. Lord, is this you?
- g. What to do and NOT do when in spiritual desolation: Rules 5 & 6
 - i. Rule 5
 - 1. The fifth: In time of desolation never to make a change; but to be firm and constant in the resolutions and determination in which one was the day preceding such desolation, or in the determination in which he was in the preceding consolation. Because, as in consolation it is rather the good spirit who guides and counsels us, so in desolation it is the bad, with whose counsels we cannot take a course to decide rightly.
 - ii. Rule 6
 - 1. The sixth: Although in desolation we ought not to change our first resolutions, it is very helpful intensely to change ourselves against the same desolation, as by insisting more on prayer, meditation, on much examination, and by giving ourselves more scope in some suitable way of doing penance.