



Ignatian Spirituality Centre

Glasgow

lentretreat.uk

Meeting Five: Fourth Week of Lent

Suggested Outline of Meeting

Welcome: We suggest beginning with tea/coffee and biscuits while people gather and are welcomed.

Opening Prayer – Take a couple of minutes of quiet prayer to ask God to be with you during the meeting. Pray that God might speak to the heart of each person in the group.

Sharing - Ask each individual to go over their prayer times this week; give them a moment to consult their journal.

You might ask them:

- How did you find praying the daily Scripture or other meditations?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Did any of the Scripture passages or other meditations have any special meaning for you?
- How did you feel over the week?
- What is God saying to you? Is God asking anything of you?

Teaching: Noticing the Good and Bad Spirit at work in our lives.

This week's suggestion for the second part of the meeting is a discussion on how we can be influenced by the positive and the negative, the good and the bad spirit. "Rules for the discernment of Spirits" is the second part of this sheet. This is a compilation and adaptation of the rules which St. Ignatius gives in the Spiritual Exercises.

It might be good to encourage people to read these rules, or read them out, then ask them to look back over their life at times when they were full of life and enthusiasm, and times when they lacked these gifts.

St Ignatius is not fatalistic. He encourages us not to accept whatever mood we find ourselves in, but rather to try all we can to move towards joy and

consolation. Remembering the good times. Trying to repeat the things that brought consolation. Consolation, Ignatius says, should be our normal state.

Some Rules for Discernment of Spirits

For anyone who is genuinely seeking to do what is right:

The Good Spirit will bring:

- enthusiasm
- life
- strength
- tears
- encouragement
- views of a way ahead
- peace and consolation
- realism
- an acknowledgement and sorrow for sin, but peace as a loved and forgiven sinner called to follow Christ.

The Bad Spirit will bring:

- endless problems & difficulties
- doubts
- Desolation and confusion
- We feel mired in our sin; unchangeable and unforgivable.
- We don't see a future.
- We are weighed down
- We have no taste for prayer or spiritual things, we are rebellious and selfish.
- We are encouraged to give up!
- The ultimate success of the evil one is rejection of life itself.

God encourages, beckons, gently, invites us on.

The evil one forces, or suggests there is no choice.

When we think there is no choice perhaps we are not thinking radically enough, perhaps the real choice is bigger than we imagine.

If we know our own weakness, we will know where temptation is most likely to strike – our weaknesses are so often the shadow side of our greatest gifts.

In times of desolation stay put, don't change plans made in consolation. Only change when something that promises to be more fruitful comes up.

Desolation might be positive, it could turn us to God, or help us realise that consolation is God's gift, not our own doing.

When suffering from desolation, try to return to consolation.

It might be useful to return to what brought consolation in the past.

In times of consolation, store the memory for the bad times.

Try to stay with consolation.

Often the person who is trying really hard to do what is right will find themselves attacked by unsettling, even crude temptations. Such a person may be so encouraged to doubt their naturally mixed motives in doing good

that they turn away from doing good. The focus has been brought round to self and one's own motives, not on the needs of the other.

It is also normal to get 'cold feet' when faced with big decisions – remember that even 'big' decisions are rarely for life.

The things of God tend to be open to the light; the things of evil tend to secrecy and duplicity. Therefore being open and talking to someone about our choices can be helpful.

4. Looking Forward – Make sure the time and venue etc. of the next meeting is clear.

5. Thank everyone for coming.