

Religion 41G Called to Love, Called to Serve: The Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life

February 14.....

Grace:I ask for what I desire—an intimate knowledge of Jesus, who has become human for me, that I may the better love and follow Jesus.

DAY 1 The Centurion's Servant Lk7:1-10 ("Lord, I am not worthy...")

DAY 2 The Penitent Woman Lk.7:36-50 ("she has anointed my feet..")

DAY 3 Application of the Senses Days 1 & 2

DAY 4 Woman Taken Jn.8:1-11* ("let him who is without sin...")

DAY 5 Need for Reconciliation Lk.12:54-59 ("be reconciled with yr brother")

DAY 6 Application of the Senses Days 4 & 5

DAY 7 Election 1 (See below)

DAY 8 Election 2—A repetition of DAY 7.

Sunday is a day for communal worship and for family.

ELECTION

Making a Decision About a Way of Life

[169-189]

PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY. THEN SPEND THE REST OF YOUR PRAYER TIME
PONDERING WHERE YOU ARE IN ALL THIS. DO NOT FORGET TO JOURNAL.

Introduction

To make a good basic decision about my way of life, the main thing is keep foremost in my mind what was looked at in *Principle and Foundation*: I am created to praise, love and serve God and thereby attain salvation. All my other choices need to be consistent with this basic choice.

Some people make choices without this basic orientation. For example, some decide first that they will marry, rather than first determining whether or not being married is what God has in mind for them and whether or not they can best serve God by being married. Some choose

first to make a lot of money and only after to serve God.

The effect of this is to get it all backwards. God is placed in second place while people's desires and preferences are placed in first place. It's as if the people expect God to come into their lives only AFTER they have chosen to put wealth, sex, fame or whatever FIRST in their lives! After all, wealth, fame, or whatever ought to be MEANS towards God; instead, they become what people choose INSTEAD of God! Such people fail to ask the question: "Is this what will best lead me to God?" Instead they say, "Well, I'll take this and then maybe I'll take God."

The point is that I need to choose God *first* and *then* (with God's help) determine how I may best praise, love and serve Him.

What are Major Decisions?

The first point is that we are not free to choose everything. For instance, I cannot choose whether to be male or female; if I am married, I cannot choose to be unmarried. In general, I may not choose to commit a sin. A choice must be between alternatives which are permitted by moral law and Church discipline.

The second point is that some choices are forever, while others may last only for a while. For example, to choose marriage or the priesthood involves a life-commitment. On the other hand, to choose to be a doctor, to choose to live in a city or to choose to own a house are decisions which may be changed.

The third point is that once I make an irrevocable decision, I must live that decision out: no other decision needs to be made. However, if later on I discover that I made this choice out of a disordered affection,¹ it certainly looks as if the decision was not what God wanted for me; still, I am most likely bound to do the best I can in a bad situation. All the more reason, then, when making this kind of decision, the person be very discerning.

The fourth point concerns decisions which may be changed. Our human nature is changeable and we tend to worry and fret. If we made a choice as freely as we could, without disordered affection, then down the road there is no need to start worrying about whether or not we did the right thing. Our desire should be to live our life, continuing to grow.

Now, if we come to the conclusion that we made such a decision under the influence of disordered affection, then it may be profitable to re-examine the whole thing and make a new, freer decision. But our guideline ought to be: can I better serve God by making a new decision?

Good Times for Making Major Decisions

Time 1: It can happen that God so directly pushes us in a direction that, without any doubt, hesitation, fear, or hesitation, we follow God's will. This does not happen frequently. But, for example, the call of the apostles Paul and Matthew were like this.

Time 2: More often, the person goes through a period of alternating certainty and doubt, of enthusiasm and lassitude, in short, of consolation and desolation. If the person has struggled carefully to distinguish these consolations and desolations, then frequently the person has learned a great deal about him/herself and God's will and so is ready to make a major decision.

Time 3: It sometimes happens that the person is in a period of peace and quiet, not being

¹"Disordered affection" is St. Ignatius's term for putting something ahead of God in one's life.

like a ping pong ball between the Good Spirit and the Adversary. During such a time, the person can choose to use his natural reason to make a good choice, since there appears to be no impelling force from God.. Of course, such a state of placidness must not be the result of one's own laziness or indifference towards God!

Processes for Making Good Choices When in Time 3

If we are in a circumstance described in **Time 3**, then there are some methods for choosing which can be helpful.

Method 1: The Balancing Scale

Step 1: Clearly state the alternatives.

Step 2: Try to be like a balance scale, my pointer directly in the middle. I desire only that my choice will be the one which will better lead me to praise, love and serve God.

Step 3: Pray to God for enlightenment. I then use my brain to carefully analyse the alternatives before me.

Step 4: Set up a piece of paper like this:

Shall I do X or shall I do Y?			
I shall do X		I shall do Y	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages

Then, proceed to fill out the columns.

Step 5: Then, still being the balancing scale, I will consider the alternatives, deciding according to how my intelligence leads me, *not according to how my feelings or appetites lead me.*

Step 6: Having made a decision, I will then begin a time or fervent prayer, offering my choice to God and begging that he will move my decision into either **Time 1** or **Time 2**. [In a way, this is asking God to move me emotionally according to His will.]

Method 2: The Good Counselor

Step 1. I imagine that a person unknown to me comes to me for advice. This person wants my help in determining how God is calling him/her. Since I myself am trying to follow God, I can really help this person: I want nothing from him/her, I will probably never see the person again and so I am free to give real unselfish advice. I imagine that this person has to make precisely the same choice which I want to make. I pay attention to the advice I give the person and determine to follow it myself.

Step 2: Having made a decision, I will then begin a time or fervent prayer, offering my choice to God and begging that he will move my decision into either **Time 1** or **Time 2**.

Method 3: The Moment of Death

Step 1: I imagine myself lying on my deathbed. At such a time I want no more

from this life and so I am very free. I think back to the time where I now am and ask myself: on my deathbed, what choice would I wish that I had made? Once I have done this, I will choose the decision I would wish to have made.

Step 2: Having made a decision, I will then begin a time or fervent prayer, offering my choice to God and begging that he will move my decision into either **Time 1** or **Time 2**.

Method 4: The Last Judgment

Step 1: I imagine myself standing before Christ My Judge. I then talk with Him about the decision which I made. Inspired by joy and happiness at the prospect of presenting to Christ My Judge the decision I made, I now choose the alternative which will more promote this prospect.

Step 2: Having made a decision, I will then begin a time or fervent prayer, offering my choice to God and begging that he will move my decision into either **Time 1** or **Time 2**.

amdg

*Some versions place this story at the end of John's gospel.