

FOCUSSING ON THE RETREAT **RETREAT OBJECTIVES.**

Introductory Instruction and Meditation

The Primary Purpose of St. Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises is that we Get Rid of Inordinate Affections and Attachments so that we may freely carry on the Will of God.

The opening paragraphs of sections one and two of his spiritual Exercises read thus:

Paragraph No. 1

“...SO, we call spiritual exercises, every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments and after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for our eternal salvation

And again in paragraph 21:

“Spiritual Exercises which have as their purpose the conquest of self and the regulation of one's life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachments.”

Comment and Remarks:

1. Many generous and genuine people tried, time and again, to improve and live godly lives and in the foot steps of Jesus. Unfortunately, more often than not, their efforts proved futile!
2. The real problem as Ignatius Loyola – the author of the Spiritual Exercises - saw it, is that we - humans beings - good and well meaning as we may be, consciously or unconsciously, affected, in Ignatius way of speaking, of **inordinate affections and inordinate attachments.**
3. By “**inordinate affections**”, Ignatius means:
 - **An inordinate affection is simply a normal and natural inclination to love self, persons or any created thing without reference to God,** namely, not for God's sake, but for its own, or for our own sake..
4. By “**inordinate attachment**” Ignatius means:
 - **A willful “consent” to such an inordinate affection or inclination or love.**

5. Examples : We are attached, to
- **Persons**: When we love: friends, relations, men or women, etc. not necessarily for the sake of God, but for our own sake, convenience, pleasure or advantage.
 - **Things**: When we love wealth, luxuries, jobs, position, status, etc. not for God's sake, but for our self glorification or gratification.
 - **Self**: When we love ourselves, our wills, our whims, our good name, our reputation, etc., not for God's service and glory but for our own satisfaction.
6. If we examine ourselves honestly and carefully, we may realize that, often enough, the cause of our spiritual and moral stagnation, of our moral failures and sins lies precisely in the fact that in our daily living, we are ruled by our inordinate attachments. They are like microbes and parasites that sap our spiritual and moral strength and vitality.
7. Our "inordinate affections and attachments" may seem small to us, even insignificant, yet potentially, they are very harmful. In the long run, they may turn into deadly spiritual and moral maladies.
8. As a sick person in order to recover from his illness, has to get rid of the microbes and parasites that spoil his health, we also, to recover our spiritual and moral health, with, we need, with God's grace, to get rid of our inordinate attachments.
9. Ignatius of Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises makes his mind absolutely clear about this point. At the very start of the retreat, in the very opening paragraphs of his book - (*quoted above*)- he tells us what the Spiritual Exercises are meant for.

Paragraph (1) "We call spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and Disposing ourselves **to get rid of all inordinate attachments**, and after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the service of God and our eternal salvation."

Paragraph (21) "**The Spiritual Exercises have as their purpose the conquest of self and the regulation of our life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment.**"

Nature of the Inordinate Attachments and their Effects.

- Holiness essentially consists in loving God.
- Love unites the lovers.
- When we truly love God, we unite ourselves to God, we become one with Him; and so in a true way, we are 'divinized, sanctified, made holy'.
- If we love something else than God, not for the sake of God, but for its own sake, we unite ourselves to that thing, whatever that thing may be; and so, automatically, we get disunited, cut off from God.

- Here lie the dangers and evils of inordinate attachments by loving something that is not God and getting attached to it, gradually, we get detached from God who is the source of all goodness and perfection. As long as we are attached to created things we shall fail to attain holiness,
- This explains why in spite of telling to ourselves that we ‘want’ to be close to God, and in spite of the many promises we make to God, we remain away from Him. The created things we are attached to, keep us away from Him.

So we can affirm” that

- **The more attached we are to creatures, the farther away we are from God.**
- **Conversely: The more attached we are to God the less attached we shall be to created things.**

Comparisons.

- Inordinate attachments are like bonds, or chains that fasten us to this world, and prevent us from flying heavenwards.
- Some bonds may be big as chains, others as thick as ropes, still others small as golden threads; however, as long as those attachments hold us tied to earthly things we shall remain grounded. We shall not be able to fly unhindered God wards and heaven wards!
- Inordinate attachments, can also be compared to walls standing between God and us. They prevent us from seeing God and enjoying his presence, his warmth, and his love.
- Some walls may be concrete walls, others of lighter bricks, others of wooden planks, still others of thin paper. But all of them stand equally between us and God.
- If we have to enjoy the love and the friendship of God, all walls have to fall

Types of Peoples as regards Inordinate Affections and Attachments

All of us, creatures of sense and feeling, are affected by inordinate affections and attachments. They are part and parcel of our human nature. So, we can state:

- a. To have them means that we are human.
- b. To consent to them means that we are imperfect.
- c. To fight them, means that we strive after perfection.
- d. To have vanquished them, means that we have attained perfection.

In which of the four groups are you in?

- You are human, therefore you have them. Take it for granted.
- Did you vanquish them? Not likely. You are not yet perfect!
- Do you fight them? Half heartedly, may be?
- Do you consent to them? Likely!

God's Love vs Self-Love.

- To love things, persons and self not for the sake of God, of necessity, implies that we love them for our own selfish profits, pleasures, convenience and interests, in short for self-love.
- **Self-love – naked egoism - is the root cause of all our inordinate affections and attachments. Self-centeredness is the source and cause of our moral and spiritual evils.**
- St. Augustine defines sin thus: “*Amor sui, usque ad contemptum Dei*”
“Self-love to the point of rejecting God”
- And holiness : “*Amor Dei, usque ad contemptum sui*”.
“Loving God up to the point of rejecting” self.
- We can only love things, persons, and self either for God's sake or for our own sake.
- When we love things, persons or self for own sake, we reject God.
- **Thus, the single root of our inordinate attachments is self-love.**
- **Inordinate attachments are nothing else but the offspring of selfishness.**

Conclusion:

That is why St. Ignatius, with keen spiritual insight, **singles out as the primary aim of his Spiritual Exercises the conquest of self, by the uprooting of all inordinate attachments.**

APPENDIX;

A SUMMARY OF THE IDEAS ABOVE AS POINTS FOR AN INTRODUCTORY MEDITATION.

PETITION: Lord that I may see! That I may will! That I may conquer my inordinate attachments.

1st Point:

- I wished, I tried so many times to lead a holy life, to be like Jesus, but I failed
- Because I allowed those parasites and microbes of the spiritual life to thrive and grow in me... my inordinate affections and attachments....
- During this retreat I have, in all honesty, to examine myself and find out which attachments I have. Attachments to things, to persons, to self....

2nd Point:

- Inordinate attachments detached me from God, and attached me to creatures...to things, to persons, to self.....
- The love of God, namely, holiness on the contrary attaches me to God, and detaches me from things...
- Perfection consists on loving God above all things, and on using all things only for the love God.

3rd Point:

- My retreat will actually be a battle against inordinate attachments and affections.
- Read, reflect and pray on paras Nos. 1 and 21 of Book of the Spiritual Exercises