

Ignatian Dynamics

- We need to learn to think of the will of God as more than just a set of instructions for how to live, a *recipe*, but as His desire for us to experience life to the full, which is something that we will only find in *relationship* with Him;
- Ignatius' key insight is all about the normal way that God and the Enemy work in our lives:
 - **Rule 1:** With those whose lives are moving away from God, the Enemy encourages, and the Holy Spirit discourages and tries to prick their conscience.
 - **Rule 2:** With those who are trying to live in relationship with God, the opposite is true: the Enemy tries to make it hard, and the Holy Spirit consoles and encourages.
- Building on this, Ignatius goes on to teach us how to listen to the goings on in our own hearts and discern what is going on there. He identifies two dynamics that we can learn to recognise in ourselves:
 - **Consolation** (literally “with the sun”) is a positive state of feelings or group of positive feelings.
 - **Desolation** (literally “without the sun”)
- There is a difference between *natural* and *spiritual* consolation and desolation. This is really important for us to learn to recognise in ourselves.
- The *natural* version of each is literally what it sounds like – feeling positive or feeling negative generally or as a result of something that has happened.
- **Spiritual consolation** is immediately and directly related to living faith and following God's will. It might be as a result of a very natural event or situation, but its result is to increase in us the gifts of faith, hope or love.
- **Rule 3** describes what spiritual consolation might look like, and covers everything from:
 - the experience in which our love for God is experienced in a felt way as “setting us on fire”, often with extraordinary intense feelings of warmth, which moves us to a complete response of the whole person to God and an all-consuming desire for whatever is God's will;
 - tears moving us to love of God, maybe from sorrow over sin or the Passion and Cross of Jesus or other things directly related to the praise and service of God;
 - every increase of faith, hope and love;
 - every inward gladness which draws us to heavenly things and our salvation.
- **Spiritual desolation** is a feeling state that inclines one *away* from God. It might be as a result of a very natural event or situation, but its result is to *decrease* in us the gifts of faith, hope or love.
- **Rule 4** describes what spiritual desolation might feel like:
 - confusion, darkness, heaviness, restlessness, sadness;
 - loss of faith, hope, love;
 - inclination to things that are not of God, or less good than our previous resolutions;
 - feeling slothful, depressed, despairing.
- This presumes that our deepest desire and commitment is *to* God. From the outset, then, it is important to understand desolation happens to all Rule 2 people.
- Spiritual desolation is never from God!
- **Rule 9** outlines the three basic reasons God allows us to experience spiritual desolation:
 - We have made a poor choice, the natural result of which is taking us away from God and our relationship with Him. Desolation acts as a *discipline* steering us away from such choices in future. As such it is desirable and helpful.
 - To deepen and purify our *love* for God;
 - To deepen our *humility* and trust in God.