

Day 4

NOVENA
TO
ST IGNATIUS OF
LOYOLA



VIDYANIKETAN

South Indian Common Juniorate

St. Xavier's College

Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala



Anvil

DAY 4

DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS IN THE LIFE OF ST. IGNATIUS

Opening Prayer

Father of my very soul, always caring and solicitous of me, I revere you with all my heart and I humbly pray you as though I had you here present before me, to commend me earnestly and much to God our Lord, that he may grant me light clearly to know his most will, and the grace to fulfil it perfectly. And the same petition I make to all of our Society, especially those I have known here on earth and are now with you in heaven. Amen.

Introduction

As we step into the fourth day of the novena in honour of St Ignatius, let's we reflect on DISCERNMENT IN THE LIFE OF ST IGNATIUS and ask for the grace that we too may become men of discernment.

Discernment is the hallmark of St. Ignatius. As a pilgrim, he stayed at Manresa Cave praying and reflecting. His life at Manresa being alone with the Alone taught him the rudiments of discernment of spirits. Surrendered his whole being in the hands of God and secluded himself from all worldly distractions and desires, Ignatius was able to fathom the movements of the spirits. First and foremost, he was able to differentiate the two kinds of spirits: the Holy Spirit and the evil spirit. One led him to Jesus his master and another led him to worldly pleasures. The guidance of the Holy Spirit offered him consolation, joy and bliss. Whereas, the evil spirit gave him desolation and dissatisfaction. The revelation stayed with him for the rest of his life and was more fully elaborated in his *Spiritual Exercises*. There he was able to offer a specific set of rules for the spiritual life to help a troubled soul discern the movements of his/her heart and discover whether a good or evil spirit was influencing them.

Since then, many have found consolation in his rules and return to them on a regular basis to better understand the movements of God in their soul. Below are the eight rules that St. Ignatius gives in his *Spiritual Exercises*. It is a difficult skill, requiring a trained perception of our thoughts and feelings. It is not only a spiritual exercise but also a psychological exercise.

Discernment is one of the significant contributions of St. Ignatius and of course the charismatic feature of Ignatian spirituality. Discernment of Spirits helps us understand ourselves, and God's will in a better and proper way. We comprehend the Movement of spirits. Our hearts and minds are open to making a better choice out of many choices. We realize the probabilities and improbabilities of choices.

Readings:

“Some thoughts left him sad and others joyful. Little by little he came to recognize the difference between the spirits that were stirring, one from the devil, the other from God. From this lesson, he derived not a little right,

and he began to think more earnestly about his past life and about the great need to do penance for it.” (Autobiography 8,9)

In every good choice, as far as it depends on us, our intention must be simple. I must consider only the end for which I am created, that is, for the praise of God our Lord and for the salvation of my soul. Hence, whatever I choose must help me to this end for which I am created.” Sp.Ex. 169

“Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.” (Sp.Ex. 23)

Let us ponder over the following questions...

Discernment is a part and parcel of our life. As human beings, we are disposed to decision-making in our everyday life. Have you ever realized that we consciously or unconsciously make decisions in our day-to-day life? To do or to not do it? How do we make decisions? Do we go by the swings of moods, likes and dislikes? Or do we spend sufficient time in prayer analyzing the pros and cons and coming to a fair decision?

Hymn : Take and Receive

Petitions

1. Dear God, the master of our soul, bless us with the grace that we may be able to understand the movement of spirits. Following the teachings of our Founder St. Ignatius and imbibing his spirit, we may be able to discern properly by listening to the inner voice of God and make a better choice of what is appealing to you and your glory. For this intention let us pray to the Lord.
2. Dear Lord, we pray for all our leaders. Bless them with wisdom and knowledge. What they decide is implemented for the practice of the people. They may be guided by the Holy Spirit so that they may not be carried away by their whims and fancies, their likes and dislikes but they may discern properly and decide what God really wants from them, especially for the betterment of the poor and the marginalized. For this intention, let us pray to the Lord.
3. Lord, our Master, as St. Ignatius learnt from his spiritual experience the guidance and counsel of the Holy Spirit in consolation and the evil spirit in desolation, we pray that we may also be deeply rooted in our spiritual life and experience your bountiful love and never-failing guidance in our life. For this intention, let us pray to the Lord.

Concluding prayer

O God, for the greater glory of your name you chose Ignatius to be your servant, to battle for Christ and the Church under the banner of the Cross. Grant to us who have received this grace of being his sons in the Society that bears your Son’s name, that through the help and example of our Father, we may fight on earth for the defense and spread of the faith, so that your name be gloried and your people may be saved. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen