

THE SPIRITUAL
EXERCISES



of Saint Ignatius

*Translation Based on Studies
in the Language of the Autograph*

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24. DAILY PARTICULAR EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

There are three different times of the day and two examinations involved in this practice

First, in the morning, immediately on rising, one should resolve to guard carefully against the particular sin or defect with regard to which he seeks to correct or improve himself.

25. Secondly, after dinner, he should ask God our Lord for the grace he desires, that is, to recall how often he has fallen into the particular sin or defect, and to avoid it for the future.

Then follows the first examination. He should demand an account of himself with regard to the particular point which he has resolved to watch in order to correct himself and improve. Let him go over the single hours or periods from the time he arose to the hour and moment of the present examination, and in the first line of the figure given below, make a mark for each time that he has fallen into the particular sin or defect. Then he is to renew his resolution, and strive to amend during the time till the second examination is to be made.

26. Thirdly, after supper, he should make a second examination, going over as before each single hour, commencing with the first examination, and going up to the present one. In the second line of the figure given below, let him make a mark for each time he has fallen into the particular fault or sin.

27. FOUR ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS

These are to serve as a help to more ready removal of the particular sin or fault

1. Every time one falls into the particular sin or fault, let him place his hand upon his breast, and be sorry for having fallen. He can do this even in the presence of many others without their perceiving what he is doing.

28. 2. Since the first line of the figure to which *G* is prefixed represents the first examination of conscience, and the second one, the second examination, he should observe at night whether there is an improvement from the first line to the second, that is, from the first examination to the second.

29. 3. The second day should be compared with the first, that is, the two examinations of the present day with the two of the preceding day. Let him observe if there is an improvement from one day to another.

30. 4. Let him compare one week with another and observe whether he has improved during the present week as compared with the preceding.

31. *Note*

It should be noted that in the figure below the first *G* is larger, and signifies Sunday. The second is smaller, and stands for Monday, the third for Tuesday, the fourth for Wednesday, and so forth.

32. GENERAL EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

The purpose of this examination of conscience is to purify the soul and to aid us to improve our confessions

I presuppose that there are three kinds of thoughts in my mind, namely: one which is strictly my own, and arises wholly from my own free will; two others which come from without, the one from the good spirit, and the other from the evil one.

33. *Thoughts*

There are two ways of meriting from evil thoughts that come from without:

1. When a thought of committing a mortal sin comes to my mind which I resist at once, and thus overcome it.

34. 2. When the same evil thought comes to me, and I resist it, but it returns again and again, and I always resist it till it is conquered.

This second way is more meritorious than the first.

35. It is a venial sin if the same thought of sinning mortally comes to mind and for a short time one pays heed to it, or receives some sense pleasure, or is somewhat negligent in rejecting it.

36. There are two ways of sinning mortally:

1. The first is to consent to the evil thought with the intention of carrying it out, or of doing so if one can.

37. 2. The second way of sinning mortally is actually carrying out the sin to which consent was given.

This is a greater sin for three reasons: 1. Because of the greater duration; 2. Because of the greater intensity; 3. Because of the greater harm done to both persons.

38. *Words*

(One may also offend God in word in many ways: by blasphemy, by swearing.) One must not swear, neither by the creature nor by the Creator, unless it is according to truth, out of necessity, and with reverence.

By necessity I mean that the truth I swear to is not just some true statement I choose to confirm by oath, but one of real importance, either for the welfare of the soul or of the body, or with regard to temporal interests.

By reverence I mean that when the name of the Creator and Lord is mentioned, one acts with consideration and devoutly manifests due honor and respect.

39. It must be noted that in idle oaths we sin more grievously when we swear by the Creator than when we swear by a creature. However, to swear as one ought, according to truth, out of necessity, with reverence, is more difficult when we swear by a creature than when we swear by the Creator. There are three reasons for this:

1. When we wish to take an oath by some creature, the intention to call upon its name does not make us so attentive and cautious to speak the truth, or to confirm it by oath only

if necessary, as we would be with the intention to use the name of the Creator and Lord of all.

2. When we swear by the name of some creature, it is not so easy to observe reverence and respect for the Creator as when in swearing we use the name of the Creator and Lord Himself. For the intention of using the name of God our Lord carries along with it a greater respect and reverence than the intention to use the name of a creature.

Hence, those who are perfect should be allowed to swear by a creature rather than those who are imperfect. The perfect, due to constant contemplation and the enlightenment of the understanding, consider, meditate, and ponder more that God our Lord is in every creature by His essence, power, and presence. Therefore, when they swear by a creature, they are more apt to be disposed to show respect and reverence to the Creator and Lord than those who are imperfect.

3. In frequent swearing by a creature, idolatry is more to be feared in those who are imperfect than in those who are perfect.

40. (Among other sins of the tongue that we must avoid are idle words.) No idle word should be uttered. I understand a word to be idle when it serves no good purpose, either for myself or for another, and was not intended to do so. Hence, words are never idle when spoken for any useful purpose, or when meant to serve the good of one's own soul or that of another, of the body or of temporal possessions. Nor are they idle because one speaks of matters

transgressions of obligations arising from any of these three groups are more or less grievous sins according to the gravity of the matter.

By recommendations of superiors is meant crusade indulgences and other indulgences, such as those for peace on condition of confession and reception of Holy Communion. For to be the cause of one acting against such pious recommendations and regulations of superiors, or to do so oneself, is no small sin.

43. METHOD OF MAKING THE GENERAL EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

There are five points in this method

1. The first point is to give thanks to God our Lord for the favors received.

2. The second point is to ask for grace to know my sins and to rid myself of them.

3. The third point is to demand an account of my soul from the time of rising up to the present examination. I should go over one hour after another, one period after another. The thoughts should be examined first, then the words, and finally, the deeds in the same order as was explained under the Particular Examination of Conscience.

4. The fourth point will be to ask pardon of God our Lord for my faults.

5. The fifth point will be to resolve to amend with the grace of God. Close with an *Our Father*.