

The Dynamics of the Exercises
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Lecture 5: The Fourth Day of the Second Week
II Standards, III Classes, and III Kinds of Humility
Defining Discipleship with Christ

Introduction. Last month we looked at the first three days of Week II [the Kingdom and the Infancy Narratives from Matthew & Luke]. I called attention to these introductory days of Week II as **Discipleship with Christ**. The discipleship with Christ represents a relationship based on knowing, loving, and following more closely Christ the Lord through gospel contemplation. Through this affective, contemplative understanding of the identity and mission of Christ, one is called to love and to follow Christ more closely. The hermeneutic of Ignatian contemplative prayer is the humanity we share with both the historical Jesus and the Risen Lord. Then, on the fourth day of Week II, Ignatius presents another panoramic set of reflections, which parallel the Kingdom consideration: the II Standards ([136] to [147]) noting in [148] that the II Standards should be made four times; the III Classes ([149] to [156]), made at the conclusion of this fourth day of Week II. Ignatius contextualizes this fourth day of Week II with a “Preamble for the Consideration of State of Life” [135] and some considerations about the kinds of humility that guide authentic Christian choice [164] to [168]. Within the dynamics of the Exercises we now pass from the call to discipleship, a vision of **what Christ the Lord intends in the Kingdom**, to **the implementation of that vision**, the fundamentals of the strategy of Jesus. **The strategy of Jesus is the focus of this fourth day of Week II.**

The text. **The II Standards** is a consideration presented in quasi-allegorical form, i.e., “an extended metaphor, especially a story in which fictional characters and actions are used to understand and express aspects of concepts relating to human existence.” If you unpack the allegorical language and images of the II Standards, these represent **the identities first of Satan [140] to [142] and then of Christ our Lord [143] to [146] and then the fundamental relationship** that each of these two persons reveals towards human beings, their “way of proceeding.” The **III Classes of Persons** offers a moral exemplum, a narrative that illustrates the way in which people respond to the invitation of Christ.

In the II Standards note the contrasting parallels between Satan and Christ: Satan seated on a throne of fire [destruction] and smoke [deceit] and Christ standing on a plain, suggesting the Sermon on the Plain in Luke’s Gospel; Satan summons and disperses, while Christ chooses and sends; the minions of Satan are demons, while the followers of Christ are apostles and disciples; Satan orders, while Christ delivers a speech to his disciples and friends, Satan dwells in Babylon, while Jesus dwells in Jerusalem. However, what Satan and Christ do share is a commitment to cover the expanse of the whole world. Thus the II Standards meditation is essentially about the apostolic strategy characteristic of and operative within the two kingdoms. The heart of the strategies is found in how Satan and Christ draw to their respective kingdoms: riches, honor, and pride contrasted to spiritual and existential poverty, humiliations, and humility. This leads into our theological and pastoral reflection on this fourth day of Week II.

Theology and Pastoral Adaptation. To understand what Ignatius offers in this fourth day, view his reflections in terms of: [1] the relationship between the first three days of Week II, which emphasize the developing humanity of Jesus from the Incarnation to the Finding in the Temple, and the beginning of the active ministry of Jesus, which constitute the remainder of Week II of the Exercises; [2] the twofold dynamic of the Exercises as **an ascetical preparation for discipleship** and as a **contemplative union with the Risen Lord** who calls us to accompany him in his contemporary mission; and [3] the election as the concrete life-style choice we will make about how we will follow the Risen Lord today. These three realities all involve a personal acceptance of the way of proceeding of the Lord, characterized by spiritual and even existential poverty, humiliations, and humility.

At the beginning of Week II we contemplate the depths, **the radicalism** of the humanity of Jesus as the way to God [cf. Luke 2:40 and 2:52]. In this humble surrender of the divine to the reality of being human [the Incarnation and Nativity], we find our first level of discipleship. [Note how in the II Standards Satan is called “the deadly enemy of our human nature,” while Christ is presented as one who helps people.] There is a consistent Ignatian assertion that all that is human is loved by God. For this reason the Son came as Jesus of Nazareth. Our task is to follow this Jesus in accepting our specific humanity as the only way that we can become the sharers of divinity that God intended. We must “do” the way of Jesus in order” to become” the way of Jesus.

Doing is the asceticism of following the life style of Jesus whose life and ministry proclaimed that “people are more important than things” [spiritual and even actual—existential--poverty], and realized that this poverty-priority would carry with it rejection, ridicule, and betrayal [humiliations]; but in this radical decision constituted the only way Jesus could touch what it was to be authentically oneself before God, truly the Son who reflected the unrestricted love of the Father and the Presence of the Spirit [true humility = total openness to God and to people].

This acceptance of the path of Jesus moves the one making the Exercises into the deeper grace, the revelation of the humility of God. For in the Incarnation and the Birth of Jesus God became human, divested God of what people wanted God to be, to reveal who God truly is, i.e., total love. These are the reasons why Ignatius contrasts the way of the Enemy of human nature with one who is the Friend of our human nature in the II Standards. Riches, honors, and pride—as a triad!—profoundly risk separating one from the human. Thus God reveals the divine risk in Jesus, to be deeply open to the human.

Yet, in God there endures a profound selfhood; that is, God cannot relinquish God’s truth, the mystery of who God is. So while God has made God available in Jesus’ humanity, God has not surrendered the essential mystery of God. And we can only stand in reverence before this twofold revelation. But we also stand in admiration before the way God has exposed God's self in Christ to the total openness and, therefore, total vulnerability of authentic love. Ignatius would say we participate with God in God’s humility not just our own. **This is where asceticism becomes transfigured into a mysticism of service. To be with Jesus is to be with Emmanuel, God with us. For Ignatius the Fourth Day of Week II orients the one making the retreat into the density of Ignatian spirituality, of why we can find God in all things, as “available mystery.” What we know, we love and follow more closely in the days ahead.**

