



2 June 1882

On Discernment

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

All the direction of St Ignatius consists in discernment of the good and bad spirits. The good spirit is recognized by its characteristics: it enlightens, strengthens, consoles, makes the heart expand. The malignant spirit, on the contrary, is manifested in fears, anxiety, repugnance, anguish, darkness... With the bad spirit, do not seek the origin of the trouble but learn to turn away from it, do not waste time on it. If God wants something from you, he will know how to make his will known. Await patiently the return of light and consolation which will certainly come before long... St Ignatius and St Francis de Sales teach the same principles, their doctrine is strong and consoling and tends to establish the soul in peace. (MOI Gc 13)

This spirit receives all natural impressions through the organs of the body. It enlivens the marvelous work that God has produced and lives in such close union with the spirit that the spirit governs it, continually receives its influence. Thus, we have also the counter-coup in our soul of all that is inferior and sensible. Our imagination, our health, our sensitivity, impressions – all that we receive from the exterior – affects the soul.

From these external influences arise consolations and desolations that are sharp and deep feelings. This having been said, it is certain nonetheless that a spirit made in God's image has also a purely spiritual faculty, capable of receiving things that are of a purely spiritual nature – as with the intelligence. But the union of body and soul is so intimate that our soul or our intelligence is raised to the heights of knowledge (knowing) only when it is upheld and aided by the senses and sensible impressions that come to it from the exterior

Faith comes to the soul only through hearing: *Faith comes from hearing*, (). The sacraments bring us grace but under material signs which are experienced by the body first. Nonetheless, there is a fine point of the soul where the intelligence and the will can withdraw and escape the action of the senses and find themselves alone under the action of the Spirit of God, as it were; and because all is spiritual, God wants to and can give himself if we are prepared by recollection, renunciation and purity of heart. God's goodness is so great that often he reveals this spiritual dwelling to beginners, inviting them to become recollected and seek God within, leaving the life of the senses.

St Ignatius has admirable annotations concerning what this infinitely good Spirit of God produces deep within souls. "The Creator alone, he says, can fully penetrate his creature, raise it, change it, set it aflame with his love." When, without any provocation from the exterior, consolation comes within the soul, when the soul feels raised to God, enlightened, expanded, filled with joy, generosity, faith, purity - when the consolation comes from within, we can hope that it is the author of every good who distributes his gifts and that the consolation comes from God. This is true consolation.

Often the angel of darkness appears in the form of an angel of light. You can recognize him by two or three traits: 1) He does not put the soul at peace and humility; he does not expand the heart and make us happy with its state nor does he make us more tender and simple with Our Lord. 2) the discourse that seems so beautiful and right, can exalt and make us act bizarrely. Be on your guard, then, but don't fail to go to prayer with confidence, simplicity and abandon just because once you heard something coming from the devil, from pride and imagination. Dismiss it, scorn the evil one and continue your way.

Even if you never feel anything, it doesn't mean that you possess God's presence less...the presence of Our Lord is not less fruitful, enriching, not less precious for you when it is not felt than when it is felt.

