

Oremus Lecture Talk #8: Desolation and Consolation

February 23, 2025, Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church

Jeremiah 29:11-14 (English Standard Version): For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

1. Summary of previous lectures

- a. “As the body cannot live without nourishment, so our soul cannot stay spiritually alive without prayer.” -St. Augustine
- b. Mission: Fall in love with God
- c. Week 6: Discernment in Prayer
 - i. Practical question: To whom am I listening? God? Myself? The evil one?
 1. Consistent with Scriptures, Magisterium (the teaching office of the bishops), Jesus?
 - ii. St. Ignatius of Loyola’s Discernment of Spirits, if we are going from sin to sin, the good spirit prompts by poking and prodding to shake us out of our complacency with sin; if we are moving towards the Lord, the good spirit blesses us with consolation and peace.
- d. Distraction in Prayer
 - i. Some distractions are the evil one trying to draw us away from the Lord in prayer, to be discouraged or agitated.
 - ii. Some distractions in prayer are small hints from the Lord to pray about that exact distraction.

2. Desolation and Consolation

- a. Some terminology:
 - i. Desolation: “Desolation is all that is contrary to consolation, such as darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to low and earthly things, disquiet from various agitations and temptations, moving to lack of confidence, without hope, without love, finding oneself totally slothful, tepid, sad, and, if separated from one’s Creator and Lord....for just as consolation is contrary to desolation, in the same way the thoughts that come from consolation are contrary to the thoughts that come from desolation.” -St. Ignatius of Loyola, Rule 4 for the discernment of spirits
 - ii. Consolation: “When the soul is inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord, and consequently when it can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but only in the Creator of them all. Likewise, when it sheds tears that move to love of its Lord, whether out of sorrow for one’s sins, or for the passion of Christ our Lord, or because of other things directly ordered to his service and praise. Finally, [consolation is] every increase of hope, faith, and charity, and all interior joy that calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one’s soul, quieting it and giving it peace in its Creator and Lord.” -St Ignatius of Loyola, Rule 3 for the discernment of spirits
- b. We long for spiritual consolation, we become agitated by spiritual desolation.
- c. Causes for desolation
 - i. We have become tepid, slothful, or negligent in our spiritual exercises.
 - ii. We could be tested to see how much we will praise him even if consolations don’t come our way
 - iii. We can be given recognition that all is from God, and not from ourselves, and helps us avoid vainglory and pride.

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- d. What to do in desolation?
 - i. Rest in the truth that we know and not the feelings we may have.
 - ii. Know that God always desires communion with us, He does not punish us with desolation, dryness or interior darkness
 - iii. Be patient with yourself and the Lord.
 - e. What to do in consolation?
 - i. Be at peace.
 - ii. Give praise to the Lord.
3. “Week 9”
- a. Acknowledge, embrace and celebrate everything the Lord has done these past weeks.
 - b. Revisit good moments of prayer
 - c. Journal is an eight week retreat
 - d. Book resources on the next page
 - e. Encouragement
4. Homework
- a. Pray with the following passages, one a day. Pay attention to the instructions in the workbook for the different types of prayer to be used.
 - i. Day 1: Luke 2:1-14
 - ii. Day 2: Luke 2:21-38
 - iii. Day 3: Luke 2:41-50
 - iv. Day 4: Luke 2:51-52
 - v. Day 5: Matthew 3:13-17
 - vi. Day 6: John 1:35-39
 - vii. Day 7: Matthew 4:18-21
 - b. With the prayer, answer the questions:
 - i. The “strongest” thought or feeling during my prayer was...
 - ii. My heart “rested” when...
 - iii. I sensed the Lord was telling me...
 - iv. I ended the prayer wanting...