



# ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

## Rules of Discernment

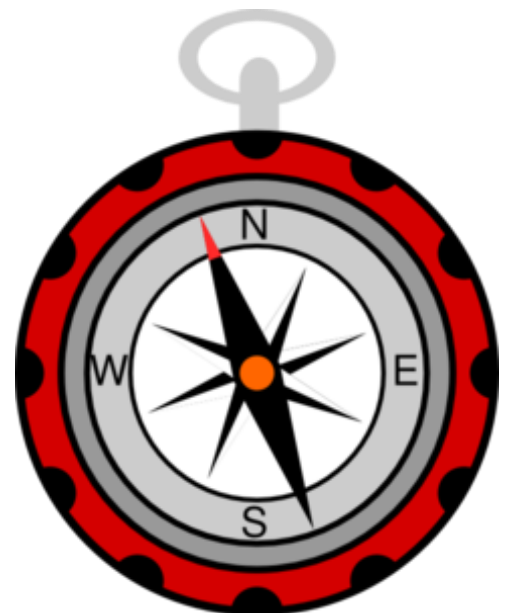
### FIFTH RULE

In time of desolation never to make a change; but to be firm and constant in the resolutions and determination in which one was the day preceding such desolation, or in the determination in which he was in the preceding consolation. Because, as in consolation it is rather the good spirit who guides and counsels us, so in desolation it is the bad, with whose counsels we cannot take a course to decide rightly. – St. Ignatius

### Explained

It is important to realize that God never causes desolation. He permits it but does not cause it. If we are feeling desolation it is important to realize that it is the devil trying to persuade us to give up our good resolutions and faith in God. It is kind of like an athlete who is preparing to run a race. As he prepares there are days in which he loves doing his training routine and there are days in which he would rather sleep in. If he is going to win the race (or at least be at his best) he must remain faithful to his training regimen.

1. What characteristics make up a good athlete? How are they similar to a person striving to be a good spiritual person?
2. Have you ever made a resolution to improve yourself and fail to follow through with it? What led to the failure?
3. How can consistency in prayer help one grow closer to God?
4. What are some of the common ways in which the devil can get you off course?
5. How can you be more faithful to prayer?
6. Remembering our definition of the word “desolation” from rule #5, why is it important not to make a decision during a time of desolation?





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### SIXTH RULE

Although in desolation we ought not to change our first resolutions, it is very helpful intensely to change ourselves against the same desolation, as by insisting more on prayer, meditation, on much examination, and by giving ourselves more scope in some suitable way of doing penance. – St. Ignatius

### Explained

One must not simply try to wait out one's feelings of desolation, but rather one should, rely on God's grace, fight against it by doing more prayer, meditation, and self-examination. To use the example of the athlete from Rule #5; when he does not feel like running, then he should not only run but also push himself to do a little more.

1. Have you ever overcome the temptation of laziness? How did you do it?
2. If the devil is trying to lead you away from God, what is the wisdom in doing the opposite of what the devil wants us to do?
3. Why is it important to not just wallow in one's desolation?
4. How can you make prayer, meditation, and examination of conscience a bigger part of your life?
5. How does an athlete get better with practice?
6. How can a person get better at praying with practice?
7. Why is it dangerous to make decisions when feeling desolation?
8. How can you work against desolation in such a way that also shows that you need God's grace?

