

THE SECOND WEEK OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES: STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS

Jean-Marc Laporte, S.J.

1 Overall structure of the 2nd Week:

1.1 The thread that runs through the second week is contemplation of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, beginning with his incarnation, his birth, his hidden life, then traversing his public life from his baptism all the way to his entry into Jerusalem. The order is chronological, but once we move to the public life, that chronology is somewhat looser because of the abundant materials offered by Ignatius from which the directee and the director are to make a choice.

1.2 The purpose of these contemplations is to bring directees to the point where, under God's grace, they are each able to make a significant choice (election) that affects his/her life. The choice that Ignatius has in mind above all is the choice of one's state of life. (Cf. # 135.) But it could be other choices less significant than that (#170, 189). For example, if some one is already in a stable state of life, the choice could be of a way to live that state in greater conformity to God's will and to the example of Christ.

1.3 Ignatius helps the directee move through the gospel contemplations towards a good election through prayer experiences which he inserts in the progression of the second week. They serve as a diagnostic tool and an invitation to greater openness to whatever God might have in mind. These experiences deal with the two standards and the three classes of persons, and are found between the contemplations of the hidden life and of the public life. They are designed to help unmask (2 standards) and overcome (3 classes) the obstacles, often hidden, which can too easily lead an directee to make an election leading him/her away from what God wants, even if he/she is fundamentally oriented to God.

1.4 In # 135 Ignatius sees the contemplations of the hidden life as a way to present two basic choices:

1.4.1 a life of perfection in the world, in obedience to the commandments, symbolized by Jesus living in submission to his parents

1.4.2 a life of evangelical perfection, symbolized by Jesus obeying his heavenly Father by being among the doctors in the temple.

The contemplations on the public life that follow are designed to help the directee make a good choice between these two options. However, these options are operative only for certain directees. Some have already made these choices. Thus more broadly the earlier hidden life contemplations are oriented to one's way of being, and the later public life ones to one's form of ministry. In his hidden life Jesus simply learned what he needed to know in order to carry on an adult task of teaching and preaching effectively and to make mature decisions. But once the time came, he was ready to move into his public life and to enter into the ministry which the Father entrusted to him.

2 **Gospel contemplation in the second week: its foundation and its role:**

2.1 The foundation for our conviction that Jesus is present to us in Ignatian contemplation of Gospel scenes is the resurrection.

In the resurrection the earthly body of X^t is transformed to a new realm where it is totally permeated by the Spirit. Our bodies in this life, like Jesus' during his earthly career, are radically limited in their ability to communicate: we can only have personal relations with those within our space and our time. This is not Jesus' limitation after his resurrection: he can communicate what he wishes, to whoever he wishes, when he wishes, how he wishes, without limitations of time or space. He appeared in different guises (Mk 16:12); the gardener, the pilgrim on the way, the bystander on the sea shore, and the moment of recognition was when and how Jesus determined it: his voice, a gesture, etc. He could have decided to be immediately recognizable by those whom he met after his resurrection, but the manner of his appearance was determined by how he wished to impact the person to whom he was appearing.

Today: Jesus continues to communicate, maybe not in the same intense way as with his disciples prior to the ascension, but still the signs of his presence are abundant for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. He often communicates through other people, when we recognize him in them (each one of us is a member of his body), but the type of presence which we are focusing on today is his presence in our prayer on the Gospel scenes.¹ It is not just an effort on our part to use our imagination to achieve vividness: whether he comes across vividly or not in our prayer, he is alive and active in us through that prayer.

In making himself known to his disciples during the period immediately following the resurrection, Jesus often taught them the deeper meaning of what they had experienced with him during his earthly life, e.g the disciples of Emmaus, the dialogue with Peter with the three questions. He is ready to do the same for us in our prayer, though he will determine when and how and to what extent. His pedagogy trumps our plans.

2.2 So Gospel contemplation is not just an activity which we carry out with our own resources and our own power. Of course, we dispose ourselves as best we can, but dispose ourselves to be not better agents of our prayer but rather better recipients of any grace of communication he has in store for us: insight, compassion, warmth of heart, resolve to act, or any other grace, perceived or hidden. Moreover when we ask for a grace, we are asking not just for clarity, a favour, a virtue, a resolution, etc. but we are asking for the presence of the giver of the grace as well as for the grace itself. In other words we are asking for the Risen Jesus

¹While that is our focus here, we must remember that the risen Lord can manifest himself to our directees whenever he wishes. It is important to ask directees to be on the alert for signs of his presence outside of prayer times: often enough those moments are the really transforming ones.

to manifest himself to us, and for us to recognize him in his manifestation.

2.3 The medium of this form of manifestation is the Gospel, in which we know He desires to be present. It is not a question of reading the gospel text, analysing it as an object, and drawing some light which comes from our reflection.² We enter into the chosen Gospel scene to see, hear, touch, smell, to take on the interiority of one or other of the persons in the scene, or perhaps of an additional character of our own devising. In this way we are opening up our psyche, making ourselves vulnerable to the spontaneous movements that take place within us. We are called not to observe from a distance but to risk relations with the various persons in the scene, to experience what happens to them and to us in the process. In doing this we are offering Jesus an opening by which he can reach us and teach us.² This is scary. We trigger off a process which we don't control. We might have plotted a scenario for our contemplation, but once Jesus has taken over, it is his scenario. We allow him to do what he wants, and in the process our desire for grace may be fulfilled way beyond our expectations.

2.4 Let us not expect powerful revelations each time we enter into prayer. Often we pray without apparent fruit, but that prayer is part of the process by which we are molded, tempered, made ready for what Jesus wants to do in us. Many prayer periods might prepare for one significant prayer period, or some special moment of revelation outside of prayer time. Thank God that much of the Spirit's action in us is hidden from us: too much awareness would lead to too much self-analysis and perhaps inappropriate self-congratulation.

2.5 It is important that Ignatius suggested a wide range of contemplations during the second week. Not just the contemplation of the public life which might be especially pertinent to those seeking to make a decision about their life activity, but also the hidden life. The latter is very important in our activist and workaholic era. Election is generally seen to be about doing; but being always underlies doing. Only three years of public life, but thirty of hidden life, of preparation, of being shaped, molded, tempered as a human being through his experiences. That is a lesson for all of us to learn.

3 **Spiritual freedom**

The term spiritual freedom was popularized by John English, but when all is said and done he was making available to us an understanding of freedom rooted in the Christian tradition which was integral to Ignatius' exercises.

3.1 To explain what spiritual freedom is we will contrast it with the notion of freedom that

²This more rational analysis may be part of how we begin our prayer, depending on our own temperament, but we must always be ready to move beyond that.

²Even offering Jesus an opening is not something we do on our own: it results from the grace of God. In classical terms, grace is prevenient (coming before any action of our own.)

is common in our culture. The distinction between these two notions is found in traditional writings, for example those of Augustine, and expressed subtly. I will use the terms freedom of fulfilment for spiritual freedom, and freedom of autonomy for the freedom that our culture knows and advocates. Both are gifts of God, the former unconditionally and the latter conditionally. God creates us for freedom of fulfilment (Augustine: “you have created our hearts restless until they rest in Thee”), but the exercise of our freedom of autonomy (saying yes when we could have said no) is required for us to come to our freedom of fulfilment. Freedom of autonomy is the basis on which we can as a gift receive freedom of fulfilment. Let us examine the differences between these two forms of freedom:

FREEDOM OF FULFILMENT or SPIRITUAL FREEDOM	FREEDOM OF AUTONOMY
our final fulfillment in God and the graces needed for us to move towards it	an initial endowment received with our creation by God
YES: we are fulfilled when we can say a final, total, irrevocable yes to God. We can never achieve this during our life, but we approximate it as much as possible in choices to which we remain faithful and that shape the rest of our lives.	YES or NO: for us to be able to say a yes to God that comes from the heart, that is not coerced, God creates us with a freedom which means that we can also say no. This is the fragility of our present human condition.
Augustine: <i>libertas arbitrii</i> (freedom of the will, that freedom being a gift of grace)	Augustine: <i>liberum arbitrium</i> (free will, which apart from the gift of grace is enslaved)
This freedom needs to be at work in the more important decisions that mark the course of our lives and shape our ongoing relationship with God.	In matters of importance, this freedom by itself will lead us astray; it functions more easily in the more trivial decisions we make each day.
This freedom is the ultimate goal of our journey, realized partially in this life, and completely in the next.	This freedom is an indispensable means to achieve that goal, but of itself it is insufficient.
This freedom is permeated by God’s grace: only transformed by that grace can I find the effective power to say yes to God.	Grace may be present or absent to this freedom: with grace I have moved to freedom of fulfilment, without it I say no to God.

<p>This freedom is always genuine, in accord with my deepest nature which is to find fulfilment in God: <i>The glory of God is human beings fully alive, and the life of human beings is the vision of God</i>: Irenaeus</p>	<p>This freedom can be an illusion: our 21st century glories in freedom of autonomy, but what it glorifies is a sham.³</p>
<p>This freedom leads to stability in one's basic choices in this life and absolute security and peace in the next</p>	<p>Without grace, this freedom is restless, one decision supervening upon the last one: infidelity and broken relations are rife.</p>

Freedom of fulfilment means the freedom to effectively move towards and reach the only fulfilment that will satisfy us, which is God. Its opposite is enslavement to sin and the attempt to find God in what is not God, making ends of what are means. Freedom of autonomy – which is prized in our individualistic 21st century – is the power to say yes or no, and it enables us to make choices, to vote for this political party or that, to go here rather than there for a holiday, to wear one's pink rather than blue pyjamas, and so on. But this autonomy is limited, and is generally ineffective except for trivial choices.

3.2 The more we move into the area in which we make basic choices which define our destiny, the more freedom of fulfilment looms large. Indeed there is no freedom of fulfilment without the grace of God at work. Our fulfilment is not on our own terms but on God's, and ultimately unless we allow God to work in us, we will not receive that fulfilment.

3.3 What Ignatius and the Exercises are about is freedom of fulfilment, or spiritual freedom. At the very outset, in #1 and #21, Ignatius tells us that the Exercises are to help us make decisions without inordinate attachments. In the Principle and Foundation (#23) he elaborates: we are to use all the helps (means) God puts in our way without mistaking them for God, using them only to the extent that (*tantum quantum*) they put us on the path to our true fulfilment. This means indifference, readiness to accept whatever God has in store for us, since that is the only way that we will find our ultimate freedom. This also means being aware of our attachments and letting go of them.

³Two examples of this illusion. Advertising media and those who trumpet western democracy try to create the illusion that we are free. Of course the last thing advertising wants to do is appeal to our genuine freedom: it seeks to by-pass freedom to manipulate our psyche, so that we will automatically choose brand X over brand Y. And it spawns addictions which may generate stable revenues for large corporations but wreak havoc in the lives of human beings. And so often this freedom is ineffective. What value is freedom of autonomy if we have nothing of significance to be autonomous about: do most refugees have any real freedom to choose a different country? Do the unemployed have any real freedom to choose job X rather than job Y? Everything conspires to lull us into a false sense of security that all is well with our world.

3.4 The glossary on the Orientations web-site defines spiritual freedom this way:

The term developed and made popular by John English, S.J. In its meaning, it includes what is meant by indifference, detachment and Poverty of Spirit. Spiritual Freedom exists in those moments when a person is grasped so completely by the love of Christ Jesus that the desires of one's heart and the actions, affects, thoughts, and decisions that flow from these desires are oriented toward God. In those moments, one desires to return love for love through one's service and praise made manifest in cooperating with God's desires for our planet and its people. Ignatius' first description of Consolation in notation [316] is itself a good working definition of Spiritual Freedom.

3.5 The contemplative method of prayer mentioned by Ignatius in his 2nd week, in which the directee is moved towards the proper use of his freedom in election, is especially well attuned to our freedom of fulfilment. Herbert Fingarette in *Self in Transformation* explores a similar insight to that of Ignatius. He says it beautifully, but in secular terms⁴:

In trivial choices...we have the closest nearest approximation to a single, momentary "act of will". Go left or go right; sell or buy; move the lever up or down...Either what we choose in these matters does not matter or it is effectively governed by pre-existing rules, goals, techniques...However, if we turn to our own important private deliberations, and certainly if we turn to the crucial deliberations which take place in psychotherapy, we see that responsible choice by no means consists simply in decisively "taking the initiative" at some crucial instant. On the contrary, significant choice involves the "free" production of thoughts, feelings, fantasies, memories; it involves the willingness to contemplate these, to "savor" them, to explore them, to give them scope to operate, if only within limits and in tentative fashion...Finally serious choices, the choices which make one a new person in a new world, involve that sometimes sudden, sometimes gradual, but always involuntary, fusion of the whole into a meaningful pattern which then "takes over." "Now I see how I must act." "Now I understand what I must do." We discover, when deliberation is successful, that "this is it." (Herbert Fingarette, *Self in Transformation*, 55-56)

Note the language of the above text, which in some ways is very Ignatian (savour, contemplate, serious choices, sudden or gradual emergence of a pattern of inevitability). Fingarette is talking about serious choices which affect the fabric of our lives, rather than trivial choices, and he tells

⁴The disciples wanted to stop those outside their group who were casting out demons. Jesus had absolutely no problem with this: "anyone who is not against you is for you" (Lk 9:49-50). This can be applied to persons who do not know Christ, but as best they can seek to bring others to authenticity and freedom. In contemporary terms, would Jesus have condemned the Dalai Lama if his more fundamentalist disciples were denouncing him as an impostor and a false prophet? Whatever is good and wholesome in what these non-Christians do and teach let us welcome and gently transpose to the higher truth of Christ.

us that we need to create the space within ourselves where the “fusion of the whole into a meaningful pattern” can take place. As a psychotherapist, he sees that fusion in non Christian terms. For us who are engaged in the Exercises, that fusion is the work of the Spirit within us. And once it takes place, Fingarette recognizes a certain inevitability to our choice to act in a certain way, akin to what happens when we choose on the basis of a consolation without previous cause.

The Second Week provides a context for the process which Fingarette describes in secular terms to take place in religious terms. The gospel contemplations provide narratives and events about Jesus with which we engage on a personal level; they evoke in us feelings, movements of spirit that we can test out; they get us unstuck and offer new possibilities for our lives, opening up the path to genuinely life-giving and creative choices. The more creative directees are in their prayer, spontaneous, willing to explore possibilities on the basis of Gospel texts, the greater opportunities they offer the Lord for his action in their hearts.

4 The Ignatian Insertions

To guide us in this process of gospel contemplation, and to lead it to life-giving election in accord with God’s will, Ignatius prescribes three prayer experiences, two of them as we move from the contemplation of the hidden to the public life, and one of them towards the end of the second week as move towards its conclusion.

4.1 The first two help us as we begin the process towards election to become aware of obstacles and pitfalls that might affect our progression towards the right election and to overcome them.

4.1.1 The meditation on the two standards is designed to help us receive the grace of insight as to the disordered patterns of attachment, some of them subtle, that could vitiate our election.

4.1.2 The meditation on the three classes of men invites us to receive the grace of ridding ourselves of whatever attachments we have discovered in the two standards meditation.

4.2 As we move towards the end of the process of the second week, the meditation on the three kinds of humility is designed to help us test our disposition and to stimulate us to an attitude of total commitment to Jesus, out of love, as we make our election.

5 The Two Standards

In this meditation Ignatius presents the two dynamics, the dynamic of grace, or of spiritual freedom, which leads to a final yes to God (eternal life), and the dynamic of sin which leads to a final no to God (eternal death). He invites us to situate ourselves within those two dynamics. What forces of sin and of grace are at play in our own lives? Already as a result of the first week process the directee in the second week should have moved beyond gross and obvious temptations towards disorder and sin. But there is a subtle way in which inordinate and

compulsive attachments, even attachments to values and endowments of a spiritual nature from God, can little by little undermine our good will and lead us down the slippery path towards final refusal of God's grace, or, at the very least cause much confusion and delay in how we and our directees progress towards God and in our ministry. The grace of this meditation is to unmask whatever inordinate attachments may still be lurking in us. We may not be notably attached to material goods or pleasures, but the insidious danger is that we might be unduly attached to some of the strengths of character and spiritual gifts with which the Lord has endowed us, and we start acting compulsively out of those strengths. Often our main character defects and our greatest endowments and gifts are intimately connected.⁵ They are the two sides of the same coin.

The basic issue is whether in fear and insecurity we and our directees clench our fingers around the good things that God gives us, material or spiritual, protecting them, making use of them according to our own will, our own designs, governed by our own fear of losing them. In other words do we want our talents and gifts to fructify or do we want to bury them in the ground, because we are not ready to take the risk of letting go and letting God?

5.1 In this meditation Ignatius presents the two dynamics of sin and of grace. That of sin is imaged by the camp of Lucifer, the deadly enemy of our human nature, and that of grace by Christ, our supreme leader and lord and his camp. What Ignatius is presenting to us is deeply scriptural. To make the point to the people of his century he uses images from his own upbringing, which is military. We are free to transpose these images. Here are the two dynamics:

⁵The Enneagram comes from outside the Christian tradition, but it can be transposed as a powerful aid to our receiving the grace of light on the subtle disorders which act on us, often without our knowing them.

THE DYNAMIC OF SIN

THE DYNAMIC OF GRACE

<p>The standard of Lucifer: - upon a throne (pride) -summons and scatters (imposition)</p>	<p>The standard of Christ: -in a lowly place (humility) -calls and sends (invitation)</p>
<p>The dynamic of Adam⁶ (Paul: Romans 5)</p>	<p>The dynamic of Christ</p>
<p>Making of God’s gifts our own possessions that we cling to (attachment); or else trying to grab hold of them by our power rather than receive them as gift. In the story, what Adam wanted to grab for himself God wanted to give him at the proper moment.</p>	<p>Letting go of them that they might bear fruit (the attitude of <i>kenosis</i>: Phil 2:6-7): Jesus’s obedience counteracts Adam’s disobedience; his forgoing his prerogatives as God’s equal Adam’s grasping and protective attitude.</p>
<p>hands that clutch God’s gifts, making of them riches that we seek to protect at all costs</p>	<p>hands that are relaxed in simply holding the gifts, that others might use them</p>
<p>riches that we covet for our own</p>	<p>gifts received from God with gratitude</p>
<p>violence towards others to achieve and consolidate our grasp of these riches⁷</p>	<p>respect of others; gentleness, humility; absorbing their violence through patience and suffering, like Jesus</p>
<p>juridical relations; force, imposition, which have a short-term impact</p>	<p>personal relations; invitation, persuasion, which win hearts, have a long-term impact</p>
<p>true freedom is circumvented: manipulation, fear, seduction are the tools</p>	<p>our true freedom is enabled and affirmed: God’s grace affirms our dignity</p>
<p>the wages of sin are death, final separation from God</p>	<p>the fruit of grace is eternal life, final union with God</p>

5.2

⁶It appears that Ignatius chooses Lucifer because in the Adam story he is the source of the temptation, and comes across as insidious, crafty, indeed diabolical, whereas Adam’s sin comes across as one of weakness and ignorance and immaturity.

⁷This theme does not occur explicitly in the Adam story, but very soon after it emerges in the story of Cain and Abel. The best modern exponent of this dynamic of violence and non-violence is René Girard.

5.3 The two dynamics , of sin and of grace, function in the same way, but with diametrically opposite effects:

	DYNAMIC OF SIN	DYNAMIC OF GRACE
BEGINNING (how we relate to the gifts God gives us)	<u>riches:</u> our attachment to God’s gifts, whether material or spiritual. We seek to protect them, hang on to them; they become riches.	<u>poverty:</u> our readiness to let go of God’s gifts, sharing them with others or even giving them up. They remain gifts.
MIDDLE (How our attitude to these gifts leads us to relate to others)	<u>honour:</u> these riches enable us to reach a higher status in the world, to be acclaimed. Our insecurity craves recognition through these riches.	<u>humiliations:</u> these gifts of God confer no status on us: we are ready to serve others, and in that to be vilified and belittled. In the terms of our culture: we are counter-cultural and pay the price.
END (How our attitude to these gifts leads us to relate to God)	<u>pride:</u> pride is the root of all the other vices, and my relationship to God is threatened, and even ruptured	<u>humility:</u> ⁸ humility is the root of all the other virtues, and my relationship to God is strengthened and confirmed

The dynamic of sin may begin with an apparently innocent hanging on to the gifts which God has given me, using them in a disordered and anxious way, but unchecked, that dynamic will disrupt my relationship with others, and ultimately my relationship with God. The underlying insecurity leads me to crave the recognition of others, and ultimately I am in the situation of wanting to control God and my salvation through what I have been able to accomplish on my own, a far cry from the humble and contrite heart the Lord wants of us. During this life, the dynamic of sin is always lurking and seeking to get a beach-head within our psyche so that it can expand and take over. The grace of this meditation is to unmask and counteract that dynamic. It has probably has

⁸Humility is a word that we might find odd at this point. The origins of the word is the Latin *humus*, which means ground or earth, and in English fertile earth with good nutrients. Humility in this Ignatian sense means being grounded in reality. The Blessed Virgin was a paragon of humility, but this did not prevent her from praying the Magnificat in which she acknowledged the good things the Lord did for her. We are not talking about feigned deference, humility with a hook, but humility based on truth.

not overcome us, but still exercises some power within our life and our behaviour and is a constant threat and temptation.

6 The three classes of persons

This meditation follows upon that of the 2 standards and is designed to consolidate the lights and graces that have come through the 2 standards. It builds on the first of the three stages of the dynamic of grace, having to do with riches and poverty.

It asks us to imagine a large sum of money, ten thousand ducats, and how three classes of people go about ridding themselves of the attachment to that sum of money. The 10,000 ducats stands for any riches which we may have identified in the 2 standards as applying to us. In other words, this meditation is designed to prepare us for the grace to wholeheartedly remove any obstacle or attachment we have discovered, whether material or spiritual, thus to truly discern and do God's will in our election.

6.1 In the first class of persons we find velleity ("I would like to" but when the rubber hits the road, "I don't want to") rather than will ("I want to and will take the necessary means"). These persons would like to get rid of the attachment to the 10000 ducats in order to assure their salvation, but when the hour of death comes, they have not done anything. In this phase of the meditation directees are invited to discern whether their attitude towards what encumbers them is velleity rather than will.

6.2 The second class of persons do have a will to get rid of the attachment, but while they may be free of attachment to the money, they really want to keep the money itself. There is a disorder and a conflict in their will: they want to be rid of the attachment in their own way rather than in God's way, because God may lead them to get rid of the money. In this phase of the meditation the directee is invited to reflect on conflicts, latent or obvious, within his/her will that may affect his readiness to do God's will.

6.3 The third class of persons want to get rid of the attachment and are willing to rid themselves of it as God inspires them to do, and they know that this might mean actually relinquishing the money (or conversely God's will may be that they keep it.). The basic point here for Ignatius is not whether or not they get to keep the money but whether they are attached or not attached to it. In other words he wants us to do God's will in the matter, which may or may not entail getting rid of the money. This attitude is reflected in the subsequent prayer for actual poverty, which has an all important proviso: provided it be for the service and praise of the Divine Goodness. In sum:

First Class	do not want to get rid of the attachment: velleity		self-illusion: thinking that their velleity is real will
Second Class	want to get rid of the attachment: will	but in their own way, making sure they keep the riches: a conflicted will.	self-illusion: hiding the way in which they in effect are resisting God's will
Third Class	want to get rid of the attachment: will	in God's way, either keeping the riches or divesting themselves: a whole-hearted will	self-transparence: they hide nothing from themselves or from God

7 The three modes of humility:

This is a litmus test consideration suggested by Ignatius as directees are moving towards the end of their contemplations on the public life. It helps them (and us) become aware of our dispositions and move closer to total readiness to do God's will in our choice(s). This time the thrust is more positive: moving from a more reasoned approach about getting rid of impediments to a whole-hearted response based on a passionate commitment to God through Jesus. The issue is not simply a rational willingness to accept whatever God wants for me (attitude of the third class of persons) but also a desire to surrender to God because of what God in Christ has done for me. His emptying out of self to save me makes me in return want to empty myself out for others.

The term "humility" is taken from the two standards: humility as opposed to pride, the seedbed of all the other virtues.

First kind: very basic. Obeying the law inasmuch as it binds us under pain of mortal sin. In other words, at this stage we would never do anything that would bring about our separation, our turning away from God. That relationship to God is for us the be all and the end all. To be in this disposition is to have received the grace without which we could not move from the first to the second week of the Exercises.

Second kind: this is the humility that is given to us as a grace after doing the 2 standards and the 3 classes of men. It corresponds to the disposition of the third of the three classes. We really want to open ourselves to whatever God wants, honour or dishonour, long life rather than short life (already in the P+F), knowing that his will is ultimately for our good. This is a higher level of

humility which for Ignatius supposes that I would never consent to commit a venial sin.⁹

Third kind: here Ignatius introduces us to a step beyond the 2 standards and the 3 classes. We move to the folly of the cross, to a passionate love which impels us to throw aside all reservations and cautions and totally follow Christ. Where the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty are equally served, we prefer poverty to riches, insults to honours, to be a fool for Xt rather than a wise and prudent person in the eyes of fellow humans. We have an eager readiness to do whatever God wants: this is indifference in the Ignatian sense (not in the nonchalant sense of "whatever" used as an exclamation by many today).

Ignatius does not presume that a directee will actually desire this kind of humility, and therefore would allow an election to be made if he/she has reached the disposition of the third class of persons and the second degree of humility. Notice again the proviso in his text: provided equal or greater praise be given to the Divine Majesty. The basic issue is never poverty rather than riches, etc., it is doing or not doing the will of God. If we don't have the desire for the 3rd kind, we can at least have the desire of the desire. In the latter case there are in us the seeds of openness to a grace which God might want to impart to each one of us gradually, readying us each step of the way for further transformation of our hearts.

©Jean-Marc Laporte S.J.
October 24, 2009

⁹An interesting question to explore is whether in our present context one can achieve a high measure of the grace of the second kind of humility without that a firm commitment never to commit a venial sin.