

Spiritual Consolation and Spiritual Desolation

What do we mean when we talk of consolation and desolation? **We are really only talking about our orientation, and the bottom line is this: which direction is our life taking us**—toward God [consolation] or away from him [desolation]?

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION? I call it consolation when some interior movement in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord; and when it can in consequence love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but 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 connected with His service and praise.

Finally, I call consolation every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy which 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.

Consolation (Blessings)

- directs our focus outside and beyond ourselves
- lifts our hearts so that we can see the joys and sorrows of other people
- bonds us more closely to our human community
- generates new inspiration and ideas
- restores balance and refreshes our inner vision
- shows us where God is active in our lives and where he is leading us
- releases new energy in us

When Experiencing Consolation:

1. Tell God how you feel and thank him.
2. Store this moment in your memory to return to when things get tough.
3. Add this experience to your life map.
4. Use the energy you feel to further your deepest desires.
5. Let the surplus energy fuel the things you don't like doing, and do them.
6. Go back to 1.

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL DESOLATION? I call desolation all the contrary of the third rule (consolation), such as darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to things low and earthly, the unquiet of different agitations and temptations, moving to want of confidence, without hope, without love, when one finds oneself all lazy, tepid, sad, and as if separated from his Creator and Lord. Because, as consolation is contrary to desolation, in the same way the thoughts which come from consolation are contrary to the thoughts which come from desolation.

Desolation (Symptoms)

- turns us in on ourselves
- drives us down the spiral ever deeper into our own negative feelings
- cuts us off from community
- makes us want to give up on things that used to be important to us
- takes over our whole consciousness and crowds out our distant vision
- covers up all our landmarks
- drains us of energy

When Experiencing Desolation:

1. Tell God how you feel and ask for help.
2. Seek out companionship.
3. Don't go back on decisions you made in consolation.
4. Stand still and remember your inner map.
5. Recall a time of consolation, and go back to it imagination.
6. Look for someone who needs your help, and turn your attention toward them.
7. Go back to 1.