

# THE “WORLD” AND ITS DANGERS

## An Honest Self-examination

### Introductory Note.

- ✓ The ideas herewith, have been inspired in paragraph No 63/3 of the “Book of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius”
- ✓ In it, St. Ignatius asks the retreatants to beg from their Heavenly Father for the grace of knowing the world so that they may put away from them all that is worldly and vain”.
- ✓ St. John, in his first letter, tells us about the World and its Dangers in three Master Strokes, ( 1 Jn. 2/ 15-17) He writes::

### The Spirit of the World is

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. “ <i>Concupiscentia carnis</i> ”   | <u>A Spirit of Lust &amp; Sensuality</u> |
| 2. “ <i>Concupiscentia oculorum</i> ” | <u>A Spirit of Avarice &amp; Greed</u>   |
| 3. “ <i>Superbia vitae</i> ”          | <u>A Spirit of Pride</u>                 |

- ✓ In the jottings below we offer some thoughts based on John’s words that may serve as an honest self-examination on how much we have been already contaminated by the spirit and mentality of the world.

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## 1. ‘CONCUPISCENTIA CARNIS’ -

### Spirit of Lust and Sensuality

#### Manifestations:

Comforts above all: housing, occupation, travelling, touring a lot, amusements, easy life, shirking work, disliking heavy duties, demanding privileges, neglecting our prayer life and other spiritual duties, dislike for penance, looking for easy and lucrative jobs, shirking works in poor areas, little love for the poor, uncooperativeness, unwillingness to share ourselves and our belongings, etc.

Softness in relationships and friendships, over friendliness and excessive familiarity with people, difference in dealings, long wasteful talks, daydreaming, lots of shallow partying and visiting, Etc.

Curiosity to know all: to see all, to experience all, reading salacious books, news magazines and trendy reviews, watching objectionable pictures, videos, wasting long hours watching T.V and indulging in porno internet programs, gossip, Etc.

Pleasure-seeking: hedonism, over eating, drinking in excess, visiting beauty parlours and even houses of ill repute, etc.

**Caution:** Infiltrations of that worldly spirit in our hearts can be detected from some of the maxims – *which, by the way, are half-truths* – we use to rationalize our behaviour, such as:

- We should not be prudish.
- Let us not be naïve.
- Why fuss about trifles?
- No one is bound to do the impossible!
- God wants us to be happy and enjoy ourselves.
- We are not expected to be heroes. .
- Why to bother about others?
- I can't help it.
- Pleasure is part of life.
- .Everybody does it.
- We are to be in tune with our times. Etc.

These maxims wrongly understood are contaminations of the spirit of lust and sensuality mentioned by St. John. **Let us be aware!** Watch out.

### **Spend some time in prayer and reflection. Ask yourself**

- Do I seek, immoderately, comforts and pleasures?
- Do I pander to my insatiable curiosity and softness?
- Have I been already contaminated by the spirit of lust and sensuality?
- If so, to what extent?
- What should I do?

## **2. “CONCUPISCENTIA OCCULORUM” -**

### **Spirit of Avarice and Greed**

#### **Manifestations**

Craving for more and more goods: dislike for simplicity of life, overspending, loath for poorly paid and unrewarding jobs and works, dislike for poor people, a craving for feathering one's nest, improving one's position by unfair means, lavish expenses, getting more and more gadgets, to live in style, never saying enough, for ever wanting more and more.

Love for wealth and money: Disquiet, anxiety over material goods. To give priority to economical considerations over people, even to the detriment of our family's peace and concord, fighting over money, involvement in court cases about properties and inheritance, cheating or lying for money sake, spending for one and neglecting others, etc.

Distrust of God Relying too much on human means, on wealth, influence, powerful connections, institutional backing, etc.

**Caution:** Infiltrations of that worldly spirit in our hearts can be detected from some of the maxims – *which, by the way, are half-truths* – we use to rationalize our behaviour, such as:

- God expects us to try hard and come up in life.
- We need money and influence to keep a family.
- In life, money is necessary even to serve God and to help others.
- Efficiency requires updating in everything.
- Poverty and penury are not a blessing.
- Conditions in our world have changed.
- We must foresee. Provision for the future is a virtue.
- We must take advantage of all new gadgets and facilities given to us by God.
- We need comfort and well-being to serve God and others.
- We have to be happy and healthy and wealthy.
- All material things are good and given us by God. Etc.

These slogans are half-truths. Let us not forget that the world lives for wealth, money and power. **Let us be aware! Watch out! Be critical of them!**

**Spend a little time in prayer and reflection. Ask yourself**

- Are you overspending in useless things?
- Do you try to live 'in style'?
- Are you satisfied with having the necessary things in life or are you craving ever for luxuries?
- Are you over worried about money and possessions?
- How many friends you have among the poor?
- Have I been already contaminated by the spirit of greed and avarice of the world?
- If so, to what extent?
- Then, what should I do?

### **3. SUPERBIA VITAE –** **Spirit of Pride and Self-conceit**

## Manifestations

Vanity. Craving for praise: Hankering for human recognition, working for one's own glorification, killing oneself for personal success, popularity and fame, getting easily offended, showing off, bragging, boasting, talking big etc.

Human respect. Worrying too much about others' opinions about self, Inability to stand by one's own conscience and convictions, easily led by others, to do wrong or stop doing good out of fear of criticism, to follow the crowd, craze for fads and novelties, etc.

Disobedience. Unwillingness to submit, by all means stick to your sweet will, Stubbornness, spirit of exaggerated independence, insubordination, even rebellion, considering oneself superior to others, etc.

Criticisms. Judging others especially authorities and superiors, being unwilling to change your opinions, etc.

To crown it all: **Pride.** Love of self above all others and above everything, refusing to take advice and correction, being blind to one's faults and failures.

**Caution:** Infiltrations of that worldly spirit in our hearts can be detected from some of the maxims– *which, by the way, are half-truths* – we use to rationalize our behaviour, such as:

- We have to have a strong personality.
- Submissiveness is bad.
  - We mustn't be gregarious.
  - Obedience kills personality.
  - We must use our common sense .
  - We must take initiatives.
  - Superiors are also men.
  - Constructive criticism is good and wanted.
  - We must have self-respect.
  - Man needs recognition.
  - Self-assertion is a virtue.
  - We must be independent and innovative. Etc.

These maxims may be symptoms of some infiltration of that spirit of pride and self-conceit mentioned by St. John **Let us Watch out!**. The world lives for self-deification, self-accomplishment, self-reliance, self- glorification at any cost, even contrary to God's will. **The world puts self at the centre and God in the periphery - if not completely out of sight.**

**Spend some time in prayerful reflection:**

- Are you prone to criticism?
- Do you worry too much about others' opinions of yourself?
- Do you obey and submit to lawful authority?
- Have you already been contaminated somewhat by the Spirit of pride and self-conceit?
- If so, to what extent?
- What should you do?

**Final Prayer****St. Ignatius' Prayer for Generosity**

Lord, teach us to be generous,  
Teach us to serve you as you deserve;  
To give and not to count the cost,  
To fight and not to heed the wounds,  
To toil and not to seek for rest,  
To labour and not to ask for any reward  
Save that of knowing we do Your will.