

# Contemporary Interpretation of St. Ignatius' 18 Rules for Thinking with the Church

1. **Active Engagement with Church Teaching:** Strive to actively engage with Church teachings. Approach them with an open mind and heart, forming a well-informed conscience through study of Scripture, tradition, and magisterial documents. Reflect thoughtfully on how to apply these teachings in modern contexts.
2. **Embrace Sacramental Life:** Participate regularly in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Seek to understand the deeper meaning of these practices rather than focusing solely on frequency, recognising their role in nurturing your relationship with God and the community.
3. **Cultivate a Rich Prayer Life:** Explore both traditional devotions and contemporary practices like centring prayer or Lectio Divina. Develop a personal prayer routine that works for you, appreciating various forms of liturgy and their role in spiritual growth.
4. **Honour All Vocations:** Respect and value all vocations equally, including religious life, married life, and single life. Engage in ongoing discernment of your personal calling and how to live it authentically in service to God and others.
5. **Commit to Spiritual Growth:** Value commitments that lead to greater service and spiritual growth. Discern how these align with your personal vocation and life circumstances, recognising that spiritual perfection can be sought in various life states.
6. **Appreciate Tradition and Innovation:** Value traditional devotions and practices, understanding their historical significance. Simultaneously, be open to new expressions of faith that resonate with contemporary life, recognising the Church's living tradition.
7. **Practice Spiritual Disciplines:** Recognise the value of spiritual disciplines, including fasting and forms of penance. Adapt these thoughtfully to modern life and personal circumstances, understanding their role in spiritual formation.
8. **Reverence Sacred Spaces and Art:** Appreciate sacred art, architecture, and symbols as expressions of faith. Also recognise modern forms of religious art and the sacredness of all creation, seeing how they can lift hearts and minds to God.
9. **Engage Critically with Church Precepts:** Seek to understand and appreciate Church precepts and teachings. Engage critically with them, exploring how they apply to contemporary issues and striving to find reasons to support them in today's context.

10. **Balance Respect and Constructive Dialogue:** While respecting Church authority, engage in constructive dialogue about Church practices and teachings. Recognise the role of the *sensus fidelium* (sense of the faithful) in the Church's development, balancing fidelity with responsible critique.
11. **Value Theological Learning:** Embrace both traditional and contemporary theological scholarship. Recognise how different approaches to theology - from the Church Fathers to modern theologians - complement each other in deepening our understanding of faith.
12. **Practice Humble Discipleship:** Avoid comparing contemporary individuals to saints. Instead, learn from both historical and modern examples of holiness, maintaining humility in assessing spiritual progress.
13. **Trust with Discernment:** While exercising critical thinking, trust in the Church's guidance on matters of faith and morals. Recognise the complex interplay between individual conscience and Church authority, always seeking alignment with Christ's teachings.
14. **Approach Complex Doctrines with Care:** Discuss complex theological topics like predestination with nuance and care. Recognise the mystery inherent in faith and avoid oversimplifications that might lead to misunderstanding or spiritual complacency.
15. **Integrate Faith and Works:** Emphasise the interconnectedness of faith and good works in living out the Gospel. Strive for a faith that is active in love, recognising that genuine faith naturally expresses itself through service and social justice.
16. **Balance Grace and Free Will:** Discuss the relationship between divine grace and human free will with care. Acknowledge both God's initiative in salvation and human responsibility, fostering a spirituality that is both receptive to grace and actively engaged.
17. **Embrace True Freedom:** Recognise that true freedom is found in alignment with God's will. Balance personal autonomy with commitment to moral and spiritual growth, understanding freedom as the capacity to choose the good.
18. **Cultivate Mature Spiritual Motivation:** While emphasising love as the highest motivation in faith, also recognise the value of other motivations. Understand the "fear of the Lord" in terms of awe and respect for God, seeing how it can lead to a more profound love and service.