



# Ignatius:

Having undergone a deep conversion on his sick bed, Iñigo eventually set out for the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat in Catalonia as the first phase in a journey he planned to take to Jerusalem. There he laid down his sword and dagger before the famous statue of the Black Madonna and took up a pilgrim's staff and beggar's clothing. He then made his way to the small town of Manresa, near Barcelona, where he lived an austere existence and crafted the essential elements of the Spiritual Exercises, which have helped millions of people throughout the world develop their faith and put it into action in their daily lives. Though he made it to the Holy Land in 1523, the Franciscans who looked after pilgrims there made him turn back because of civil unrest in the region. He then focused on his studies, first in Barcelona and Alcalá and eventually at the University of Paris, where he began to refer to himself as Ignacio and became close with two men—Francis Xavier and Peter Faber—who would become the first Jesuits.

By 1539 the original companions of 10 men who shared Ignatius's vision wrote the *Formula of the Institute* to outline the fundamental essence of the burgeoning order for papal approval. In 1540 Pope Paul III issued a bull approving the Society of Jesus. Years later, Ignatius wrote the *Constitutions* that articulate the principles by which the Society achieves its goals.

From the time of his conversion until his death, Ignatius's vision was to “find God in all things” and “help souls.” The many shapes this vision has taken over the years can be seen even in the earliest days of the Society, as newly ordained Jesuits dealt with kings and paupers, with the devout and with public sinners, with popes and prelates, with lowly pastors and with convents of nuns. They excluded no category of the laity from their ministry. By 1565 they were active in many countries of Western Europe, but also in Brazil, India, Japan, and elsewhere. They preached, taught catechism, proposed new sacramental practices, and sought to help orphans, prostitutes, and prisoners in jail. They developed patterns of piety that were peculiarly their own, no matter how traditional the elements upon which they drew. They appropriated both scholastic and humanistic learning and tried to relate these two cultures to one another. They wrote plays and were present at the

Founder of the Society of Jesus and a saint in the Catholic Church, Ignatius of Loyola was a man of great vision. But he was far from conventional. A former soldier and courtier, he became a great champion for the Catholic faith. Rather than retreating from the world, he sent the Jesuits into the heart of cities all over the world. His legacy, which includes the Spiritual Exercises, is helping people find God in all things and serving those in need.

**I**N THIS JUBILEE YEAR of the Society of Jesus, we celebrate St. Ignatius Loyola by exploring who he was and how his vision has shaped the lives of countless people in the 450 years since his death.

Iñigo López de Loyola was born, the last of his father's many children, most probably in 1491 at the castle of Loyola in the Basque territory of Northern Spain. Having received the chivalric and academically sparse education of his class, he served in the household of Juan Velázquez de Cuéllar, chief treasurer of King Ferdinand of Aragon. When the king died in 1517, Iñigo entered military service under Don Antonio Marique de Lara, duke of Nájera. In 1521, while defending a fortress in Pamplona from a French invasion, he suffered a blow from a cannonball that shattered his right leg and badly wounded his left. While recuperating at the castle of Loyola, he was forced to read the only literature on hand: the lives of the saints and *The Life of Christ*. To his great surprise, Ignatius was deeply moved by the stories. As he daydreamed about the kind of life he would lead once recuperated, he felt a calm when he imagined living as St. Francis of Assisi or St. Dominic did.

# Man of Vision, Saint of the World

by John O'Malley, SJ

Council of Trent. They engaged in polemics with Protestants and, to their dismay, found themselves caught in controversies among Catholics. They supported various Inquisitions, yet sometimes found themselves the object of inquisitorial scrutiny and censures. They taught in universities. Within seven or eight years of their papal approval, they founded and operated schools.

## What Kind of Saint Was Ignatius Loyola?

Beatified in 1609 and canonized in 1622, Ignatius was anything but a traditional saint. Rather than exemplifying a “contempt of the world,” he was a “worldly saint.” For example, in our day few pursuits seem more worldly than orchestrating public relations, yet Ignatius was an adept practitioner of PR. He instructed Jesuits not to be shy about their accomplishments when they wrote to him. He told missionaries in distant lands to write back not only about their ministries but about quite secular topics like “how long the days of summer and winter are,” about “plants and animals,” and about “anything that seems extraordinary.” He wanted to show these letters around to win interest in his Society and good will for it, and to create an image of the Order that would counter slanders circulating in high places. Once Jesuits began to run schools, the good will Ignatius generated opened the doors of potential benefactors. The Jesuits were among the first professional fundraisers and Ignatius, knocking on doors himself, became something like the chief officer in what we today call a development office.

Toward the end of Ignatius's life, with the Jesuits ever more solidly established in Rome, he began looking for benefactors to build for the Society a church in the center of the city. Before his death, he approved plans for what eventually became the Gesù, one of the most important church buildings in the modern era. He also raised money to buy a villa so that the Jesuits in Rome would have a place to rest and relax—a far cry from the other-worldliness of traditional saints. Moreover, rather than subscribe to the ascetic extremes of the medieval era, Ignatius preached moderation in food, drink, sleep, labors undertaken, care for one's health, and time devoted to prayer.

Especially remarkable about Ignatius was the way he so easily seems to have adopted and subscribed to all the components of the humanistic education that the schools he founded entailed. This meant, among other things, that most Jesuits would spend most of their time not in the confessional or pulpit but in the secular space that is a classroom. Moreover, in those classrooms most of them would teach not the Bible or the Fathers of the Church but pagan literature, that is, the classics of Greek and Rome. They would teach these subjects not simply as models of eloquence but as embodying, it was believed, a moral and spiritual message that would lead students to grow up to be, yes, “good pastors” but, as well, “civic officials,” “administrators of justice,” and “fill other important offices to everybody's profit and advantage.” This was a way of implementing dedication to “the common good” that Ignatius claimed for the Society.

In his sanctity Ignatius was, of course, fundamentally continuous with the Christian tradition, but he carved out for himself and for his followers a special “way of proceeding,” to use his expression, that resulted in something distinctive within it. Today, more than 460 years after the founding of the Order, Jesuit priests and brothers remain committed to changing location, occupation, and method to go “wherever the need is greatest,” preach the Good News, and serve the Church. In the United States alone, there are 28 coeducational colleges and universities—with more than 1 million living alumni/ae—and 48 secondary schools—with more than 300,000 living alumni/ae—affiliated with the Society of Jesus. Jesuit social ministries confront the social problems of the day and advance social concerns such as the rights of immigrants, Native Americans, African-Americans, Hispanics, and women—as well as housing, hunger, and health care. More than 300 US Jesuit missionaries work abroad with local Jesuits and lay colleagues in Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Near East, India, and Micronesia, and at home among Native Americans. Hundreds more work in parishes administering the sacraments or in the 26 Jesuit retreat houses throughout the country directing retreatants through Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises and bringing people closer to God. ■



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