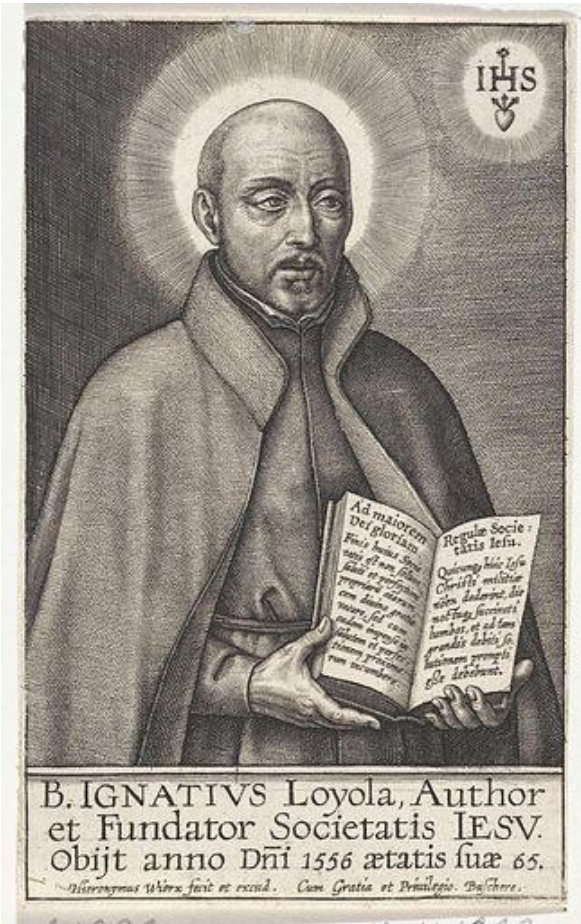


Saint Ignatius of Loyola – discipline in the service of God

The early life of Ignatius



Saint Ignatius of Loyola was born in 1491 into a noble family in the Basque region of Spain. As a young man, he dreamed of becoming a successful knight and serving his king with honour. He valued courage, discipline, and achievement and pursued a military career. In 1521, during the defence of Pamplona, Ignatius was seriously wounded by a cannonball. During his long recovery, he asked for books about knights and heroic adventures. Instead, he was given books about the life of Christ and the saints. As he read them, he began to reflect deeply on the purpose of his life. Gradually, he realised that he wanted to dedicate himself completely to the service of God.

A new mission

After his conversion, Ignatius did not act impulsively. He approached his new mission with the same determination and discipline

that had characterised his military service.

He spent long periods in prayer, reflection, and study. He carefully examined his thoughts, motivations, and actions in order to align them with God's will.

Ignatius understood that lasting change requires discipline, perseverance, and self-control.

The Spiritual Exercises

One of Ignatius' greatest contributions to the Church was the development of the **Spiritual Exercises**.

The Spiritual Exercises are a method of prayer and reflection designed to help people discern God's will and grow in self-discipline and spiritual maturity.

Ignatius taught that a person should not be driven by emotions, impulses, or personal preferences alone. Instead, decisions should be made through careful reflection, prayer, and discernment.

His approach combines discipline of mind, heart, and action.

Founder of the Society of Jesus

In 1540, Ignatius founded the **Society of Jesus**, commonly known as the Jesuits.

The Jesuits became known for their discipline, education, commitment to mission, and willingness to serve wherever they were needed.

Ignatius expected high standards from himself and from those who followed him. At the same time, he emphasised respect for others, responsible leadership, and service to the common good.

Under his leadership, the Jesuits established schools, universities, and missions throughout the world.

Discipline and proper conduct

Ignatius taught that discipline is not merely about obeying rules. True discipline means ordering one's life towards a worthy purpose.

He believed that personal discipline creates freedom. A disciplined person is better able to control emotions, resist temptation, make sound decisions, and remain focused on a mission.

At the same time, Ignatius emphasised propriety, respect, and consideration for others. He knew that leadership requires not only competence but also integrity and good conduct.

Why is Saint Ignatius venerated?

Saint Ignatius is honoured because he transformed his life and dedicated his talents, energy, and leadership abilities to the service of God and others.

His life demonstrates that discipline and perseverance can help individuals overcome difficulties, grow in character, and fulfil their mission faithfully.

Throughout the centuries, his teachings have helped countless people develop stronger habits of prayer, reflection, leadership, and responsible action.

What can we learn from Saint Ignatius of Loyola?

Saint Ignatius remains an outstanding role model, especially for military personnel.

His example reminds us that:

- Discipline begins with self-control.
- Good decisions require reflection and discernment.
- Leadership demands integrity and responsibility.
- Respect for others is essential to professional conduct.
- A clear mission requires commitment and perseverance.

Military personnel often operate under demanding conditions where discipline, reliability, and sound judgement are essential.

Saint Ignatius teaches that true discipline is not simply following orders, but developing the character, self-mastery, and integrity needed to fulfil one's mission honourably and responsibly.

Feast Day

The feast day of **Saint Ignatius of Loyola** is **31 July**. He is honoured as the founder of the Society of Jesus and remains a model of disciplined leadership, spiritual discernment, and faithful service.