



### *Prayer for the Opening of the Ignatian Year...*

They fired the canon. It exploded. It ripped through the wall of the castle of Pamplona. It shattered the right leg of a leader of the castle's defenders, Inigo de Loyola. A flying rock injured his left leg. The assault almost killed him, but he survived.

Inigo – Ignatius – had been able to persuade those other defenders to stay with the task the king had entrusted to them. He was ambitious and strong-willed, stubborn. He was brave, and his bravery was contagious. He was a leader.

The French assault army respected this middle-aged nobleman and transported him back to his home castle, some 70 miles to the west. This journey on a litter was extremely painful. But Inigo endured it. His adventuring days, his military days, his courtly days were over. He was going home. His life, and ours, would never be the same.

During his long recovery, Ignatius found God in a new and profound way. He recognized the errors of his sinful past. He had been a true man of the world with ambition for glory and fame, with passion to serve the powers of the day, with an eye for the women he met and impressed. He now turned his energy toward serving God as the saints had done in centuries past. He began to put his journey at the service of others, to lead others to find the consolation of God's ways as he had found it.

A canon shot. O Lord, when have I felt the shattering of a canon shot, known the agony of a heavy wound? Nothing so dramatic as Ignatius? Still, have I experienced a sudden call, an urgent need to change, to reach out, to speak an uncomfortable truth? When have you broken through my complacency and urged me to move off in a new direction? How have I responded?

Great things came from Ignatius's shattered leg. He found you, O God, for himself and then gathered others to share his experience. He attracted a band of young men to join his mission of proclaiming Jesus to his world. They preached, they guided souls, they founded schools that changed the shape of education in Europe and later around the world.

Let me know, loving God, where you want me to go. Subtle, quiet perhaps, still you send the cannonballs that surprise and change us and our ways. These cannonballs are works of your love. Ignatius found new life in his near death. Let us find that new life more quietly, more peacefully, but no less deeply as we seek to know your ways.

- Written by Fr. Ed Schmidt, S.J.