



Ignatian Spirituality: Faith for our Lifetime

"The desire for God is written in the human heart." (CCC 27)

Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) was born in northern Spain to an aristocratic family. Trained as a courtier, he was a nobleman destined for the service of the Spanish royalty. It was while in his military service that he was wounded in battle. During his recovery he read a book on the lives of the saints and a four-volume life of the Lord, Jesus Christ. His study and prayer led him to a limited recovery and to a general reassessment of his life which ultimately led him to dedicate himself to the service of God and God's people.

With his companions Ignatius realized that God was calling them to care for a world that seemed to be falling apart. The world and Church alike desperately needed immediate and long-term reform. He attracted the interest of people who were seeking a personal path to discern what it meant to live in a relationship with God and others. Ignatius's processes of learning and dedicated life continue as relevant for our time as he was for his own.

Briefly, the fundamentals of Ignatius' beliefs are outlined below with these points adapted from the Ignatian Partners Web site: (www.ignatianpartners.org)

- a conviction of the importance and value of each human person created by God and gifted as an agent of God in the world;
- a desire to find the voice of God speaking in each person's life by adopting a process of learning from and through the ordinary events of the person's life;
- an understanding of oneself as an agent of purposeful change in the world;
- a commitment to a life pursuing justice for all persons;
- an outreach to people in need of recognition or who have been excluded from society and social responsibility;
- a commitment to personal learning and growth throughout one's life in the context of the challenges and gifts of each person's life;
- Theologian Monica Hellwig comments, "Perhaps most characteristic of all, the whole [Ignatian Spirituality] process is geared to consciousness raising of the individual..., to be alert to one's own motivations and inclinations, and to learn to discern what is the voice of the Holy Spirit of God and what is the voice of a spirit that is counter to God's spirit, a spirit of destruction and disorientation."

Ignatius was transformed by the notion that God loved him, redeemed him, and encountered him in every aspect of his life. He learned how he could come to trust his instincts and inclinations as well as his personal creativity in searching for and coming to know and trust God at work in each person's life. He found a purpose and meaning that would illuminate his life and inspire the mission discerned in his days.

Through his work of forming and inspiring the Jesuit community Saint Ignatius of Loyola continues to offer us these insights to guide our search and journey in faith today. This year we celebrate his history and heritage as we look forward to the opportunities and blessings Ignatius helps us all to recognize and share with each other and with our church and society in our day.

St. Ignatius of Loyola pray for us!