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## *Ignatius of Loyola*

*founded the Jesuits, the largest Catholic religious order, 450 years ago.  
Along with the now 25,000-member society he launched, he left  
us with a living spirituality that offers sustenance for our journey  
of faith doing justice.*

# Finding God in all Things

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## A SPIRITUALITY FOR TODAY

• BY MONIKA K. HELLWIG

**I**GNATIUS OF LOYOLA, founder of the largest Catholic religious order, the Jesuits, has been attracting widespread attention this year, the 500th anniversary of his birth. Ignatius' legacy goes far beyond the founding of the Jesuits—he launched a distinctive style and tradition of spirituality that is particularly apt for our time.

As a slightly younger contemporary of Martin Luther, Ignatius experienced—quite independently—the same concern as Luther for the revitalizing of Christian faith and life by a return to the source. Jesus. What makes Ignatius' legacy distinctive is that he saw the need for this return in terms of the particular challenges and difficulties of his own time—and that the 16th century offers some close parallels with our own.

The revival of classical learning and critical scholarship five centuries ago presented some of the same challenges to faith as those we meet today in the context of scientific discoveries and new technology. Moreover, the discovery of the "new world"—Columbus was making ready to set sail the year Ignatius was born—offered some of the same type of experiences of limits breaking down and reality coming under human control as we experience in the space age.

Finally, the existing corruption in the symbiosis of church and state, and the polarities set up by the reform movements and the resistance to them, left ordinary people in a state in which they often did not know whom to trust. People could not rely on the traditional patterns of church life that they had taken for granted. Ordinary, individual Christians needed to have clear criteria and strong personal convictions in order to live a truly Christian life in the midst of the confusion of voices and of values.

The formation of Christian believers with such clear vision and singleness of purpose was the task to which Ignatius dedicated himself. But he came to this by a very circuitous route in his own life.

### A JOURNEY TO FAITH

**BORN THE 13TH CHILD** in a noble, landed family of the Spanish Basque country, Ignatius (whose given name in Basque speech was Inigo) found himself in the social position of the *hidalgos*—the landless, younger sons who had to seek their fortune in dependence on the court, the greater nobility, the military, or the court of a major archbishop.

Ignatius was placed by his family in the household of a duke of the Basque region, and had the training of a courtier—which included

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**WHY** is an ecumenical magazine paying so much attention to the founding of a Catholic religious order? What do the life, message, and legacy of a Spaniard born 500 years ago have to say to us today?

Plenty, as the accompanying articles illustrate. What is important to us here is not just the history of the Jesuits, but the basic central insights on the spiritual life that Ignatius and his followers have left us.

Ignatius of Loyola established an approach to spirituality that has proven helpful to Christians through the centuries—and continues to be a fertile ground for prayer and discipleship today. The impact of this spiritual teaching has gone far beyond the Catholic Church, with good reason.

As Christians today seek to enrich their own lives in the Spirit, more and more people are finding themselves drawn to women and men in the church's history who serve as guides for the journey. These pathfinders—the "classics" of Christian spirituality—help us to see more clearly our own way along the journey of faith.

—The Editors

positive values such as the commitment to service, the expectation of courage and endurance, a piety that pervaded all aspects of life, and the absolute requirement of courtesy and self-control at all times and in all relationships.

More troublesome from a Christian point of view, the values of a courtier also included a fierce consciousness of social status and concern with one's personal honor; an intense personal vanity about physical appearance; a tradition of courtly love that deliberately encouraged flirtation and extramarital affairs; and a tendency to dissociate piety from morality and lifestyle, even while making prayer an important part of one's life.

It was a strange mixture of the passionately dedicated and the recklessly destructive that made up the accepted way of life for people like the young Ignatius. He, like other young men in his circumstances, learned the bad aspects along with the good, and did not come to question this way of life for a long time. He fulfilled various commissions, both diplomatic and military, with great distinction, and perhaps would have continued in this way if he had not been seriously injured in the ill-fated defense of the city of Pamplona against the French.

Because of the severe nature of his injuries, Ignatius was forced to submit to a series of excruciatingly painful surgical operations. To distract himself during the long recovery time between operations, he desperately wanted to read.

He began with courtly tales of romance and valor according to the fashion of the time, but as the days, weeks, and months stretched out, he was so bored that he finally started reading some of his sister-in-law's books, notably a four-volume life of Christ and a collection of biographies of saints. Both had gathered in the process of translation into Spanish a good deal of the rhetoric and flourish of the courtly tales of romance.

At first rather peeved and disgusted by those devout books, Ignatius became more and more drawn to them. Much later in his life, when Ignatius looked back upon this time, he identified his experience of these readings as the point of his conversion.

His first move after regaining health was to do penance for his sins by making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in which he would try to see what he should do with the rest of his life. Trained in the ways of chivalry, Ignatius began his pilgrimage with an all-night vigil at a shrine of Mary, dedicating himself to the service of her son. Then, having put a few affairs in order, he evaded his priest-brother who had accompanied him, sent the attendant

servants home with the mules, and continued on alone.

Ignatius exchanged his clothes with a beggar and then, for fear of being recognized and brought back, went on to the town of Manresa. He remained there unknown for many months, living in great poverty in a long retreat of prayer and austerities—which was later to become the source of his design for spiritual formation.

On his return from Jerusalem a year later, Ignatius knew that the next thing he had to do was to study, beginning with Latin so that he would have access to philosophy and theology. He wanted to understand his faith and share it with others. He gave sermons and taught religious knowledge to anyone who would come, especially, but not only, the poor and children. Like many other lay preachers in history, he aroused the suspicion (and perhaps the envy) of the clergy. He was called before the Inquisition and once arrested and forced to abandon clerical garb.

Ignatius eventually moved to Paris where, while still a student himself, he began to collect a band of like-minded followers. He invited them to let him guide them through a formative faith experience based on his own months in retreat in Manresa. The design for this formation has come down to us under the title *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, and the followers were to become the first group of Jesuits, members of the Company (later the Society) of Jesus.

Ignatius lived to establish a widespread religious order and see its rule approved by the pope for posterity. The missions and educational institutions founded under his guidance and during his lifetime have had a lasting impact on the modern world in Europe, the Americas, and Asia. But what is of greater interest here is the particular contemporary

relevance of the spirituality that is shaped by the *Spiritual Exercises*.

#### THE SPIRITUAL LEGACY OF IGNATIUS

IN THEIR BASIC FORM, the *Spiritual Exercises* consist of a silent retreat of about 30 days in which four or more hours are given each day to certain prescribed meditations. In an alternate form, the *Exercises* are spread over a much longer period of time and are done while a person follows his or her ordinary occupations, making time each day for one period of meditation.

For young people trying to discern their particular vocations in life, for people at a crucial juncture in their lives who can make themselves free for 30 days, and for those training to direct others, complete withdrawal from everyday life to some



### The Features of Ignatian Spirituality

1. Grounding of everything in profound gratitude and reverence.
2. Continuous cultivation of critical awareness.
3. Confident expectation of empowerment to accept and exercise responsibility.
4. Unequivocal commitment to action.
5. Recognition that the gospel of Jesus Christ is essentially countercultural and revolutionary in a nonviolent way.

—MKH

quiet retreat house seems to be a suitable plan.

But there are many people who can derive great profit from the experience who could never get away like that. For such people, the extended part-time retreat has special advantages of its own. Resolutions and conversions made in withdrawal from one's ordinary life may look very different when regular activities and contacts are resumed, while those made in the everyday context of life are likely to be more realistic and therefore firmer.

When Ignatius set out the pattern of meditations for the *Exercises*, he took the content from the basic structure of Christian beliefs as rooted in the Bible, especially in the gospels, often concretized in imagery drawn from the traditions of his childhood. The material is divided into four sections called "weeks." The first week is focused on the theme of creation, including reflections on the nature and consequences of various disruptions of the harmony of creation and the focus and balance of human life by sin.

The second week consists of meditations on the hidden life and public ministry of Jesus, including some very colorful and dramatic meditations geared to recognizing and adjusting one's own stance of discipleship. The third week consists of meditations on the passion and death of Jesus, and the fourth week is given to the events of the resurrection.

Besides offering the subject matter in brief comments and sending the retreatant back to the texts of scripture, Ignatius describes different ways of praying and has the exercitant explore ways of prayer most suited to that individual.

But perhaps most characteristic of all, the whole process is geared to consciousness raising of the individual (though that term does not occur in the text) 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. For this, Ignatius thought, it was necessary to be sensitive to the light of the Holy Spirit in prayer so as to make appropriate discernments in uncharted situations.

These *Exercises* have been at the foundation of the training of Jesuits. They have shaped the way this congregation of vowed, celibate men (most of whom are priests) has run its many schools, has carried on a practice of spiritual direction of laity, has carried out missions and pastored local churches, and has engaged in social justice issues in far-reaching and radical ways.

In a similar way, the *Exercises* have been basic in the formation and spirituality of a number of congregations of religious women. Through the Jesuit schools, they have shaped many generations of young boys, and through Jesuit colleges and universities, generations of intellectuals, male and female. In their schools and in their parishes, Jesuits have invited lay people into groups called "Sodalities" (now known as Christian Life Communities) for spiritual formation, support, and apostolic outreach, and have served as spiritual directors.



## : IN THE PATH OF IGNATIUS

While most Jesuits are ordained priests, the roots of the order lie in lay communities—and some of the most profound and wide-reaching impact of Ignatian spirituality has been outside the priesthood.

The Society grew out of the lay groups that formed among people who had experienced the spiritual exercises established by Ignatius. The groups (which were exclusively male until 1751) met weekly to help each other live out the principles of the *Exercises* in their daily lives, engaging in such activities as starting credit unions, working with street people and prisoners, and ministering to people dying from the plague.

Over time, the groups (called "Sodalities")—which grew to number 80,000—lost touch with their Ignatian roots and evolved into spiritualized prayer societies separated from action. In the last 40 years, the movement has sought to return to its Ignatian sources. Now known as Christian Life Communities, they are active in more than 50 countries on all continents.

The lay Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC), founded in Alaska in 1957 and operating somewhat on the model of the Peace Corps, has sought to put into action the Ignatian values of service among the poor, commitment to social justice, rootedness in prayer and spirituality, and a living out of a simple lifestyle in community.

Some feel the volunteers are following closely in the path of Ignatius. "To my mind, the JVC is perhaps the most authentic 'Jesuit apostolate' in the United States in being faithful to the spirit of Ignatius and [former Jesuit Superior General Pedro] Arrupe," commented Joe Hacala, S.J., director of the Campaign for Human Development, the U.S. Catholic bishops' social justice arm.

Perhaps the broadest impact of the Jesuits in this country today comes through their 44 secondary schools and 28 colleges and universities—which recently celebrated the 200th anniversary of Jesuit education in the United States (Georgetown University was founded in 1789). Worldwide, there are more than three million alumni of the 600 Jesuit schools—as well as countless others who have benefited from informal Jesuit education programs, such as the *Fe y Alegría* ("Faith and Joy") schools in Latin America.

—The Editors

## FAITH DOING JUSTICE

THE 31ST GENERAL CONGREGATION of the Society of Jesus in 1965 refocused and re-energized a new generation of Jesuits to commit their lives to the central mission of the order: "The service of faith and the promotion of justice," rooted among the poor. This old mission, made new under the leadership and inspiration of Jesuit Superior General Pedro Arrupe, has been strongly affirmed under the guidance of his successor, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach.

Last summer, Kolvenbach offered four challenges to Jesuits gathered in Detroit under the aegis of "faith doing justice": 1) active advocacy in the face of social, economic, political, and cultural injustice; 2) rigorous study, analysis, and discernment; 3) conscientizing the members of the church and society about the realities of injustice and the social demands of the gospel; and 4) examining the ways we ourselves live, calling for both simplicity of lifestyle and communities of solidarity.

The Detroit gathering brought together, under the banner of the National Office of Jesuit Social Ministries, Jesuits and their colleagues from the wide variety of Jesuit justice ministries. Organizers said the conference "was perhaps the most significant gathering in U.S. Jesuit history of persons committed to making the gospel come alive, inspired by the Jesuit charism among the poor."

The Faith Doing Justice '91 gathering paid homage to past heroes of Jesuit commitment to peace and justice, including such deceased "Jesuit giants" as Horace McKenna, John LaFarge, Lou Twomey, Phil Carey, Mort Gavin, Dennis Comey, and others.

Today the vision of Ignatius—inspired by Arrupe and monitored by Kolvenbach—is being lived out by Jesuits in apostolates as diverse as the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota; work among refugees at Proyecto Pastoral in Los Angeles; social research at the Center of Concern in Washington, D.C.; lively inner-city Jesuit parishes such as St. Aloysius in Washington, D.C.; prison ministry across the country; and among lay organizations such as the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

— Joe Hacala

JOE HACALA, S.J., director of the Campaign for Human Development of the U.S. Catholic Conference, was the initiator and organizer of the Detroit "Faith Doing Justice" conference and has been a longtime national leader in Jesuit efforts for justice and peace.

In his early apostolic outreach, Ignatius would direct several people in a town through the *Spiritual Exercises*. He would then expect some of them to direct several others each so as to spread the influence as far as possible. In the course of generations and centuries, more tradition has built up and more training and experience are expected of directors. A living tradition has been created for which the text is just a rough guideline. Each generation shares in the cumulative wisdom garnered from the prayer, reflection, and life experience of all the foregoing participants.

Out of this living process comes a vigorous, optimistic, world-affirming spirituality, committed to service but critical at all times of what is or is not really service for the reign of God in the world.

## GROUNDING IN GRATITUDE AND REVERENCE

BECAUSE IT IS BASED in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatian spirituality is grounded in intense gratitude and reverence. It begins with and continually reverts to the awareness of the presence and power and care of God everywhere, for everyone, and at all times.

This sense of a wholly integrated universe, society, and personal life is one that certainly still existed in the Spain of Ignatius' youth, but was rapidly disintegrating for most people in his mature years. In his youth he lived in a culture in which intimacy with God, and a sense of belonging and being protected, could still be taken for granted, requiring no special effort or attention on the part of the individual.

By the time Ignatius was guiding other people through the *Exercises*, the culture did not automatically convey such a sense of intimacy with God, so that the individual had to make a deliberate effort to cultivate it. That, of course, is very much the case in our own culture, in which people can live most of their lives without ever being confronted with the question of the ultimate meaning and purpose of their lives.

There are two primary types of prayer and relation to the divine in Christian tradition. The first, known as *via negativa*, tries to encounter God by leaving senses, imagination, and intellect behind to meet God in the darkness and silence of pure presence without content. The second, known as *via positiva*, tries to encounter God through the appreciation of what God does in creation.

Ignatian spirituality emphatically chooses the latter as the predominant and ordinary type intended for most people. In that choice lies a directive to cultivate visual and other sensory imagination in prayer—contemplating scenes from the gospels by entering in to them in imagination to play a role and to come to a relationship of warm affection with Jesus and his family, friends, and followers.

The process seeks to bring about a sense of the attitudes and responses that Jesus would take in situations that do not actually arise in the gospel narratives but do arise in our lives. Nothing is more central in Ignatian spirituality than this sense of intimate companionship with Jesus, and the total service that follows from such intimacy as a matter of both gratitude and family loyalty.

**A CULTIVATION OF CRITICAL AWARENESS**

A SECOND SIGNIFICANT FACTOR in Ignatian spirituality is the cultivation of critical awareness of what is right and wrong in one's own life and attitudes, one's society and culture, and in specific situations. To many people of our own time, no matter how well disposed in Christian faith, the idea of repeated meditations on sin, day after day, is repugnant. The idea so pervasive in our culture that one should always look on the positive side, and that guilt is a manifestation of neurosis, can easily make Christians uncomfortable with the very idea of sin.

Yet what happens in the first-week meditations on sin is the subtle but effective cultivation of imagination and consciousness. To reflect on the classic stories of the sin of the fallen angels, the sin of Adam, and catastrophic destructive acts in history is not only to experience horror and grief, but also to know the disappointment over what might have been and has not been realized. Combined with the conviction of the unflinching power and loving care of God, and leading into reflection on the meaning and impact of the events in the life of Jesus, these meditations on sin are also an invitation to imagine the world and one's own life becoming quite different.

What is rediscovered in the Ignatian approach to spirituality is that the traditional Christian doctrine about the sin of Adam, also called original sin, is not a message of doom but one of hope. It declares that the world as we have it is not the best we can hope for, nor the world that God intends, but a badly broken and distorted one which can be restored and can be immeasurably better and happier than it now is.

**EMPOWERMENT TO RESPONSIBILITY**

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY contains within it a strong sense of empowerment to accept and exercise responsibility in the work of redemption that is still going on in the world. There is much emphasis on the surrender of the

will and all the faculties to God—not in a passive sense but rather on the model of an *hidalgo* such as the young Ignatius, dedicating (and in that sense surrendering) his freedom, strength, skills, and faculties to the service of his Lord. It implies therefore maximum ingenuity, diligence, and creativity—all at the single-minded service of the Lord's cause.

The *Exercises* are geared, among other things, to the experience and recognition of grace in one's own life. They have an implied understanding of grace not as divine action alongside of human freedom and action, but rather as divine

action empowering human action, divine freedom liberating human freedom. In Ignatian spirituality individuals are taught to expect and to recognize their own empowerment by grace.

The pattern of this is very much like that which we find in testimonies of the Christians of the first and second centuries.

These Christians wrote that Christ had done two things for them: He had illumined them and he had empowered them. The empowerment had to do with the clarity with which they now saw everything because of the illumination by Christ.

In our own times of introspective and psychological awareness, it is easy to recognize this process happening. The more clearly we see ourselves in the light of creation, sin, and redemption, the more encouraged and empowered we are to act in consort with Christ in the transformation and salvation of the world.

**A COMMITMENT TO ACTION**

DIRECTLY CONNECTED with this is the fourth characteristic of Ignatian spirituality: the focus and insistence on action. This appears as a theme with many variations. Loyalty is expressed in service. Love is appropriately manifested in actions rather than in words. Repentance means action for change.

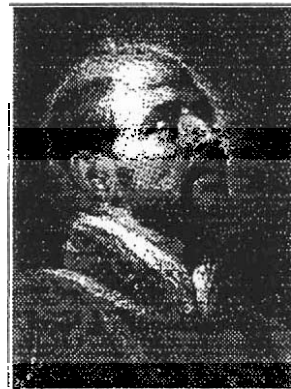
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**A SPIRIT OF LIBERATION**

■ It is not surprising that in our own times the liberation theology of Latin America has come mainly from those formed in the Ignatian tradition. Liberation theology has questioned the separation between religious and profane areas of human life and experience. It has challenged the assumption that people are oppressed because God intends it that way, and that the privileged have no obligation to do anything to change it.

Even more provocative, liberation theology has challenged the type of preaching that tells the oppressed that they have no right to challenge their condition of deprivation and suffering, nor to do anything to change it.

These challenges arise directly out of the assimilation of Ignatian spirituality in a constant and intensive return to the gospel. Many objections to this new theology of the oppressed may be based on the fear of violence, but violence is not in fact being promoted. The real risk to the status quo is that of a solidarity so great among the deprived that they cooperatively manage to better their condition, thereby leaving them less available for exploitation.

It was the fear of solidarity among the marginalized that led to the execution of Jesus, and it is a similar fear that has recently created so many martyrs in Latin America, including the Salvadoran Jesuits. But the inspiration behind the movement to liberate the marginalized from their isolation and oppressed consciousness is to be found (certainly not exclusively, but abundantly) in Ignatian spirituality.



Peter Paul Rubens

Serious conversion to Christ means commitment of all one's resources—material and personal—expenditure of all one's energies, steady focus of one's attention.

One very important consequence of this is the gradual elimination of the profane margins of one's life. But in Ignatian spirituality this does not mean that one no longer engages in worldly responsibilities or in social, economic, and political affairs. What it does mean is that engagement in such affairs ceases to be profane, which means outside the range of the religious commitment. All the secular activities of life are brought into the faith commitment, and are therefore brought under scrutiny and evaluation in the light of what is revealed in Christ about the meaning and purpose and true orientation of all creation.

This approach applies not only to the immediate contacts of one's life, but also to social structures and policies at all levels of human society. This commitment to the integration of all aspects of life, therefore, does not allow a separation of politics and economics from religious values and judgments.

Redemptive action for justice and peace in the public affairs of the human race threatens the disproportionate privilege of many who call themselves Christians, probably in good faith, but think that this pertains only to their individual private lives. While the vigorous opposition to social justice and peace activities in the public realm may be in good faith, it is not disinterested.

The commitment to action and to public responsibilities often meets an objection of another kind. This is the view that contemplation is at the heart of religious faith, and that contemplation and action are incompatible with one another. Contemplation is certainly at the heart of faith, because contemplation means an attitude of receptivity, attention, and awareness of divine presence and guidance. This is beyond question.

However, Ignatian spirituality refuses to see contemplation as being in opposition to action or incompatible with it. It was said of Ignatius himself in his mature years that he seemed to be contemplative in action. What is seen as incompatible with contemplation is greed, possessiveness, acquisitiveness, cruelty, indifference to the needs of others, pride, self-assertiveness, and preoccupation with oneself and one's public image. But hard work, preoccupation with serving the needs of others, and so forth are seen as opportunities to be contemplative in action.

### A REVOLUTIONARY SPIRITUALITY

ALL OF THE FOREGOING leads to the final characteristic of Ignatian spirituality as countercultural and revolutionary in a nonviolent way. Much of the reflection in the *Exercises* is geared to an effort to share the vision of Jesus and understand what he was and is trying to do in the world and its history.

The meditations are very clear in their implication that the task that Jesus received from God is not to save souls out of the world, but to save the world, to refocus and reintegrate all creation by drawing the human race back into its proper relationship with God—and therefore proper relationships within

the human race and all the created universe.

Such a perspective judges everything in terms of what we can know of the divinely intended outcomes. Such a vision leads to radical judgments about the way we are conducting the affairs of human society now. Such a vision certainly does not allow one to take for granted wars; poverty; famines; injustices; marginalization of ethnic, racial, linguistic, or economic groups; or other unnecessary sufferings or deprivations.

One cannot simply say that this is how it is and how it will always be because the world is like that—in the context of the *Exercises*, that is plainly untrue. It is untrue because God does not intend that kind of arrangement of human society in which so many are excluded. These sufferings are not divinely made but humanly made. God has not abandoned creation but reaches out at all times and to all peoples with possibilities and grace for redemption—not, according to the gospels, a redemption confined to life beyond death, but redemption of all aspects of human life in this world which we help to shape for good or for ill.

By these insights and criteria, radical change is not only possible but necessary, not only to be wished for but to be worked for in practical ways, not only an option for the remote future but a challenge in our present. These attitudes are formed in the meditations on the passion and death of Christ and those on the resurrection.

Meditation on the passion and death of Christ has often been proposed as an invitation to accept the way things are. But what is implicit in the Ignatian approach is contrary to this, because it invites attention not only to what Jesus suffered physically, but to the discernment process that Jesus went through and the action to which it led—which in turn provoked bitter persecution. This leads to an appreciation of the radical nature of the positions Jesus took in his own times and to the real impact of his teaching on political and social structures in the long run.

Readiness and confidence for personal discernment is a key element of Ignatian spirituality, and it is one that is particularly important in our times. It implies training, as well as constant attention in prayer in evaluating actions by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, working for an attitude of detachment from self-interest in making decisions, and trying at all times to enter into the mind and intentions of Jesus.

When someone does this and gains confidence, tempered by humility, that person has a basis for countercultural decisions, creative initiatives, and difficult undertakings. But unless an individual has the focus and the confidence for discernment in uncharted situations, that person is likely to be a passive obeyer of codes and commandments, not responding to the most important commandments of all: to love God with heart and soul and to love one's neighbors as oneself. ■

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