

Companion guide
for the video program

PIONEERS
of the
Spirit

Ignatius Loyola

Prepared by Ann T. Snyder
and Lisa Hamilton

Gateway Films
VISION  **VIDEO**

Pioneers of the Spirit

IGNATIUS LOYOLA

Background

Ignatius of Loyola (Inigo Lopez de Recalde, 1491-1556) was born at the castle of Loyola, Spain. It is believed that he was born on Christmas night. He spent his youth at the court of King Ferdinand and entered the army quite early. He does not appear to have had much education in his youth. After his wounding at the battle of Pampeluna, May 20, 1521, he was to spend several months at his father's castle. The story of his conversion, as told in the video, speaks of the books provided by his sister-in-law, who was an influence in his motherless life from the age of seven.

After his conversion, it is said that he exchanged clothes with a beggar before proceeding to the Dominican monastery of Montserrat (3/25/1522), where he offered his military accouterments before the image of the Virgin of Montserrat. This probably began his chivalrous devotion to the Mother of Christ. Ignatius then entered the monastery of Manresa where he began to live an ascetic life and to write his *Spiritual Exercises*. He left Manresa in the summer of 1523 for Jerusalem. He traveled without money or supplies. On September 4 he visited the Holy Sepulchre. He returned to Venice in January of 1524, realizing that he could not support himself in missionary efforts and that he was woefully in need of an education. Ignatius went to Barcelona and at age thirty-three he sat among school boys to learn the rudiments of Latin. Two years later he entered the University of Alcala, and in 1527 he entered the University of Salamanca. He was soon in serious trouble with the authorities because he tried to induce the students to take courses in his *Spiritual Exercises*.

On August 15, 1534, Ignatius and his spiritual companions, Peter Faber, Francis Xavier, Alfonso Salmeron, Jaob Lainez, Nicholas Bobadilla and Simon Rodriguez, vowed to enter hospital and missionary work in Jerusalem, or to go wherever the pope would send them on the completion of their studies. The work they chose to do in large measure duplicated that of the Theatines, who were founded in Rome in 1524. The goal of the Theatines was to reform the Church and free it of abuses, and they were an important part of the Counter-Reformation. Although the Jesuits had difficulty obtaining papal approval of their plans, Pope Paul III eventually approved of their zeal and arranged for them all to be ordained priests in Venice by the Bishop of Arbe.

At this time, the emperor, Venice and the pope declared war on the Turks, so Ignatius and his company set aside their missionary dreams and devoted their preaching and charitable efforts to Italy. In Rome Ignatius set up homes for converted Jews, whom both Christians and Jews refused to accept. Later, he insisted that converts from Judaism be welcome in the Society of Jesus.

The papal bull *Regimini Militantis* was published September 27, 1540, approving the Society of Jesus but limiting its number to 60. Over two hundred years later, on July 21, 1773, a Brief of Suppression, *Dominus ac Redemptor*, put the Society in suspension for a time as a result of political pressures, although the Society's constitution and its members were not in any way condemned. In 1814, Pope Pius VII restored the Society of Jesus. The Society, along with teaching orders of men and women, was banished from Germany in 1873 during the *Kulturkampf* (a conflict of cultures).

The Jesuits have long been accused of advocating the position that the end justifies the means. This idea may stem from the Jesuit support of the theory of *Probabilism*, a system of moral theology taught by the School of Salamanca in the 16th century. According to this system any probable action may be followed even though an opposed action is or seems to be more probable.

Ignatius founded grammar schools, the Roman (Gregorianum) and German Colleges in Rome and established missions in China, Japan, India, Malaya, Ethiopia, the Congo and Brazil.

The Jesuits in America are associated with high schools and universities. There are some 28 colleges and universities including Marquette and Loyola. Jesuit literature advises that their emphasis is on the humanities and teaching young people to think critically.

The Jesuits have also recognized today's new ways of thinking by translating Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* into "inclusive language."

The Society of Jesus has to its credit many martyrs, who suffered in North America, Japan and England. The Jesuits have managed to survive all the pressures and criticisms brought against them, outlasting suspension and suppression by their own church, and continue today to serve in the spirit of their founder.

Questions for Discussion

1. Ignatius is quoted as saying, "It is not permissible to speak idle words. I take this to mean words that are of no benefit to myself or anyone else." Is this a good rule to live by, or does it discourage musing and imagination in the development of one's faith?
2. There is the anecdote of the old Jesuit who was more afraid of meeting Ignatius in the after-life than God. How much was Ignatius' personal drive and force of character responsible for building the Society?
3. What can we learn from the story of Ignatius Loyola?
4. If Ignatius could return to earth today what do you think he would make of the challenges of our modern world? Of the challenges to religion, especially?
5. The Society of Jesus is formed along military lines, echoing the influence of the army on Ignatius' early life. The Salvation Army also followed the quasi-military form. Do you think this is a viable concept for founding an organization today?
6. Ignatius lost his mother at the age of seven. Yet his sister-in-law provided him with a second chance to experience maternal care. Even when Ignatius was grown, she cared for him during his long recovery, and it was she who provided him with books about saints and Christ. How do you think Ignatius' life might have been different without her care? Has anyone in your life given you a similar second chance? What would it be like if you were able to provide a person with a relationship similar to one they've lost?
7. Shortly after his faith was ignited, Ignatius began to live a life of intentional self-denial. Yet he found no spiritual growth in denying his physical needs. What role do you think practices such as fasting and self-imposed silence should play in your own spiritual practice?
8. As Ignatius' faith grew, so did his thirst for knowledge about the Bible and the Church. How do you find the balance in "book knowledge" and more intuitive processes such as prayer in your own spiritual life? What is the relationship between head and heart in your spiritual past, and in your spiritual future?
9. Imagine how Ignatius' life and work would be different if he did not, as the Rev. O'Keefe emphasizes, feel led to work with a group. What role have groups of diverse people with similar goals played in your own spiritual development?
10. One of Ignatius' most lasting contributions is his emphasis on discernment. How do you experience discernment in your own life? Is discernment something that has a place outside spirituality, or is discernment strictly a spiritual phenomenon?

11. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* are still published, read and used for retreats and private contemplation. What do you think makes them so timeless? What do you think the impact is on both traditionalists and feminists that, fairly recently, women have been trained as spiritual directors? What about the use of inclusive language?
12. How do you think Ignatius' background as a knight continued to influence his spirituality? Think back to formative experiences or former jobs you've had in the past. In viewing your spiritual life, what conclusions would other people draw about your past?
13. As part of his emphasis on discernment, Ignatius speaks of the difference between a tear falling on a rock and a tear falling on a sponge. A tear rolls off a rock as evil denies compassion. But a sponge, like Christ, is willing to absorb our pain. Think of two objects that represent evil and Christ for you. After meditation, write about how the object representing Christ would react. This exercise may be something you'd like to discuss with others.

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