

# What is Ignatian Spirituality?

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President

Ignatian spirituality originates out of the experience of Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), a Basque courtier, who during a period of enforced convalescence from battle wounds gradually awakened to the action of God in his life. Through a prolonged period of introspective struggle, this pilgrim came to an experiential understanding of how God works within the human heart. In works like the Spiritual Exercises, the Autobiography, the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, and his extensive correspondence with his companions across the world, Ignatius left a rich store of spiritual wisdom. This wisdom centers on the conviction that God can and does deal directly with any man or woman who seriously seeks for meaning and direction in life; and that God can be sought everywhere.



For Ignatius, God's action within the human heart leads to peace and commitment: peace with oneself and with others, and a commitment to help others. Thus Ignatius emphasizes magnanimity, a generous willingness to work for great enterprises, especially those which help the greatest number of people and have the most enduring results. For Ignatius the prime example of a life lived generously for a great enterprise is Jesus the Christ. This explains his insistence that the order he founded be called the Company or Society of Jesus.

Throughout his spiritual teaching, Ignatius stresses the principle of adaptation. By that he means that God works with respect for the freedom of each individual, with regard for the history, temperament, and talents of each man or woman. As a result, Ignatian Spirituality is about human encounter not posturing; about freedom not manipulation; and about individual choice not group pressure. Thus Ignatian spirituality invites inter-religious dialogue and ecumenical participation. It respects all people who try to live justly and respect other no matter what their religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. It is about invitation and inclusiveness, not about exclusion and control.

\*\*Fr. Julio Giuliatti, S.J., is an authority and respected teacher of Ignatian Spirituality. He presents to us and asks us to consider this in our daily lives, and to reflect upon how these teachings have affected the spiritual and intellectual development of generations of University students. Future reflections will illustrate how Ignatius' teachings are unfolded on Campus, and their relevance to us today .