

Readings: 1 Corinthians 10: 31 – 11: 1; Psalm 33(34): 1 – 10; Luke 14: 25 – 33.

Ignatius was born in AD 1491 into a prominent family in the Basque country of northern Spain. From the age of seven to seventeen he was a page in the household of a prominent official in the kingdom of Castile. During this time he lived a worldly life: A companion wrote later that “he was particularly reckless in gambling, in his relations with women, in quarrelling and with the sword.” His life at court ended when the king of Castile died and was succeeded by Emperor Charles V. Ignatius then became a soldier and was injured and captured during a siege. During a lengthy period of surgery and convalescence he found that there were none of the books of romance and adventure which he had enjoyed reading, and instead he was given a *Life of Christ* and a book of *Lives of the Saints*. Gradually he was influenced by the lives of saints like Dominic and Francis, and decided that he must do penance for his earlier sins. He set out to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but was advised to wait until he had advanced further in the Christian life. He spent ten months living alone – although not without contact with others – and during this time gradually became aware of a vocation to help others to grow in faith. He began to compose his *Spiritual Exercises*, based on his own prayer, reading, suffering and mystical experiences. In 1523 he began a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, begging his way on the journey. Franciscans persuaded him to give up his project for converting Muslims, so he returned to Spain. There he spent nine years in study, during which time he continued, although still a layman, to act as spiritual adviser to people in trouble. While at the University of Paris he gathered six disciples and, all having now been ordained as priests, they went to Rome, where they resolved to form a new religious order, committed to missionary work and teaching. In 1540 this new order, The Society of Jesus, received papal approval and Ignatius was appointed its first General. For the next fifteen years Ignatius remained in Rome directing the work of the Society. He died on 31st July 1556

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(JULY 31ST, 2021)

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