

**Thursday of the 7<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter**

**500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Conversion of St. Ignatius of Loyola at the Battle of Pamplona and the Beginning of the Ignatian Year**

**Homily of Bishop John Barres**

**St. Agnes Cathedral**

**May 20, 2021**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Gospel of John focuses on the Glory of God. Jesus prays to his Heavenly Father: “I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

The great saints of the Catholic Church dedicated their lives completely to the Glory of God and their lives are powerful commentaries on John 17.

One such saint is the Founder of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. His name is St. Ignatius of Loyola and he lived from 1491-1556.<sup>1</sup>

His life and Jesuit charism are summarized in the phrase *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam – For the Greater Glory of God*. This simple phrase has focused, grounded and motivated the mission of holy Jesuits and Jesuit universities, institutions and apostolates for centuries.

Today – May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – we celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Conversion of St. Ignatius of Loyola and we also begin an Ignatian Year as we simultaneously celebrate the Year of St. Joseph. The Ignatian Year starts today May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and lasts till the Memorial of St. Ignatius on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

An ambitious Spanish soldier, Ignatius was wounded by a cannon ball at the Battle of Pamplona on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1521.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Barres’ Pastoral Letter introducing the Ignatian Year *‘Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam – For the Greater Glory of God’*. Parts of this homily are taken directly from that Pastoral Letter.

In his convalescence, the Holy Spirit led him to a conversion to a spirit of holiness and mission that has impacted Church and world history ever since.

Ignatius had a strong-willed ambition to rise in the Spanish military and to rise at the Spanish court. In this life context and in his convalescence from his military wound, he experienced a type of Copernican Revolution, a Revolution that removed his own face from the center of his universe and placed the Son of God, the Face of Jesus Christ, at the center of his life, unique charism and mission.

His obedience to Jesus Christ and to the Church was so fine-tuned mystically that the Jesuit charism includes a special fourth vow of obedience to the Pope, the Successor of Peter.

Together, during this Ignatian Year, we pray that St. Ignatius of Loyola may be proclaimed a Doctor of the Church and we give thanks for the Jesuit contemplative charism and missionary spirit expressed so powerfully in St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*.

A Doctor of the Church is someone recognized for making an outstanding theological, spiritual, mystical contribution illustrated in their writings and by their holiness in life and creative influence in and on the mission of the Church, an influence that endures centuries after their death.

St. Ignatius of Loyola does precisely that.

In *The Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola*, Fr. Hugo Rahner, SJ traces to the contemplative heart of St. Ignatius the tremendous influence of the Society of Jesus through the centuries: "In the final analysis, the influence of Ignatius and his Order upon the Church, upon politics, civilization, and world-wide missions, derives from the spiritual life that animated them. For the great achievements which history records always have their beginnings in the tranquil center of the human heart."<sup>2</sup>

The National Shrine of the North American Martyrs is in Auriesville, New York (Diocese of Albany) is dedicated to the three Jesuit missionaries who were martyred at the Mohawk Indian village of Ossernenon in 1642 and 1646. These New York Jesuit martyrs include the lay brother St. Rene Goupil (1608-1642), the priest St. Isaac Jogues (1607-1646) and the lay brother St. John Lalande (died 1646).

On this historic day, we give thanks for our Holy Father Pope Francis, a Jesuit himself from Argentina, who is a son of St. Ignatius and his *Spiritual Exercises*.

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<sup>2</sup> Hugo Rahner, *The Spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1953), x.

We give thanks for the many American sons of St. Ignatius and his *Spiritual Exercises* such as the theologians Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ (1918-2008) and Fr. John Courtney Murray, SJ (1904-1967) who had such a prominent role as the theological architect of the Second Vatican Council's 1965 *Declaration on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humane)*.

We also remember and pray for the cause of canonization of Fr. Walter Cizek, SJ (1904-1984), a native of Shenandoah, Pennsylvania in the Diocese of Allentown. Fr. Cizek survived 15 years in a Russian prison camp – including five in solitary confinement. He tells his story and how his Catholic faith gave him courage to endure the Gulag in *With God in Russia* (1964) and in *He Leadeth Me* (1973).

We give thanks for the many American daughters of St. Ignatius whose ecclesial missions and expression of the feminine genius in the Church were forged and formed in Jesuit spirituality.

Today the People of God of the Diocese of Rockville Centre send our gratitude, prayers and best wishes to Jesuits across the United States and to the network of Jesuit high schools and 28 Jesuit colleges and universities with their over one million living graduates.

We remember in a special way the Jesuit universities and colleges close to us: Fordham University, Canisius College, the College of the Holy Cross, Fairfield University, Boston College, Georgetown University, Le Moyne College, Loyola University, St. Joseph's University, St. Peter's University and the University of Scranton.

We also give thanks and prayers for all the Jesuits who served at **Innisfada**, the historic Jesuit retreat house that was located in Manhasset for many years.

Of course, we offer our prayers and thanks to all the Jesuit priests who have served in the Diocese of Rockville Centre at St. Anthony's parish in Oceanside.

One of the ways we will celebrate the Ignatian Year together is through a series of pastoral reflections on St. Ignatius and the Jesuit charism by some of our priests.

You will find this morning on **drvc.org** the pastoral reflection of Fr. Michael Bissex, an associate pastor of St. Patrick's parish in Huntington on St. Ignatius's conversion following the Battle of Pamplona...

As we celebrate this Ignatian year and as we are inspired by the life and teaching of St. Ignatius of Loyola, we follow in his path – the path of He who is the Way, the

Truth and the Life -- grounding every remaining moment we have on earth *Ad  
Maiorem Dei Gloriam – For the Greater Glory of God.*