

Everything is for God's greater glory. The motto of Saint Ignatius of Loyola reminds us of the purpose of life. God, the Creator of heaven and earth, has imbued each human with an immortal soul. We are created in the image and likeness of God. In the words of the Old Baltimore Catechism, "God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in heaven."ⁱ It is not necessary to perform grand gestures, all things can be done for the greater glory of God. "When we acknowledge that everything is for God's greater glory, the quest for power, wealth and knowledge ... is transformed into the desire to give glory to God by placing ourselves and our resources at the service of others and especially those most in need of help."ⁱⁱ

Saint Ignatius learned this lesson the hard way. On May 20, 1521, his quest for glory as a swashbuckling soldier came to a crashing halt. A cannon ball shattered one leg and wounded the other. His life was spared but forever altered. He spent a long period of convalescence trying to regain his health and strength. Looking for something to keep his mind occupied, he tried to read about heroic soldiers who conquered the battlefield. These stories entertained him in the short run but left him depressed shortly thereafter. With his injuries, it was obvious he would never again be a soldier.

Turning to another source of entertainment, he began to read about the lives of the saints. Francis of Assisi suffered a set back in battle but in the process of recovery found an enduring and deep relationship with God that transformed his life. Ignatius of Loyola was also impressed by the founder of the Dominicans, Saint Dominic. In his early 20's, Dominic gave away everything he had to feed the hungry and stave off starvation when Spain was desolated by a famine. The heroic virtue of the saints not only lifted Ignatius' spirits in the short run, these stories inspired him to a new way of life for the greater glory of God.

The long period of convalescence turned Ignatius' life away from a selfish pursuit of fame and fortune to a selfless and sacrificial way of life. "This incident ... turned his life upside down and forced him into self-examination. Out of this spiritual awakening, Ignatius had a burning desire for holiness and a zeal to do great things for God, which ultimately led him to a lengthy process of self-surrender."ⁱⁱⁱ

In the midst of our own difficult situations, we too can be inspired to place our trust in God and to be uplifted as we unite our sufferings, our joys, and every detail of our life to God for conversion. As we face our limitations and weaknesses, indeed our own sinfulness, we find a loving God who gave his life for our glory. Jesus suffered and died to set us free from sin. He broke the chains of death that we might share in the promise of eternal life. As God has done for us, we are called to do for others. "Brothers and sisters ... whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31b).

ⁱ sacred-texts.com/chr/balt/balt1.htm

ⁱⁱ Loyolapress.com, Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

ⁱⁱⁱ americamagazine.org/faith/2021/04/22/st-ignatius-conversion-500-years-later-240490