



Dear Friends in Christ:

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTORAL COORDINATOR

May Christ's peace, joy and hope be with you all!

It just so happens that the day I'm writing this is the Feast day of St. Ignatius of Loyola (July 31), the founder of the Jesuit order. His is one of the three medals I wear around my neck, the others being one of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and a very small medal of the crucified Jesus with the Jerusalem cross on it. All three medals are attached to a crucifix.

They're a bit worn now with the plating worn off most of the metal and yet I place it around my neck every day despite its wear.

That particular medal signifies the gift that is Íñigo López de Loyola, this former soldier for Spain. It reminds me how his love for Jesus serves as a model in my own commitment to Christ.

When I was hired at Bellarmine Prep in Tacoma in 1983 as the Campus Minister, I began to further investigate St. Ignatius' rich tradition. Ignatian spirituality, if you don't know, is based on the "Spiritual Exercises" of Saint Ignatius. It is spirituality based on the experience of these c. 150 exercises. All Jesuit novices make the Spiritual Exercises in form of a 30-day silent retreat. The retreat is divided into four time periods—entitled "weeks"—which develop themes based on God's love and our sin, the life of Jesus, His passion, and the resurrection of Christ. Through the use of daily prayer and meditation on the Scriptures, the retreatant is led to a deeply personal encounter with Jesus. St. Ignatius also developed an alternative version of the retreat entitled the 19th Annotation Retreat. Since most people don't have 30+ days to attend a retreat, it is one hour per day over a 7 to 9-month version using the same meditations.

Since I've made the Exercises myself, and directed others in the Exercises in various forms, I'm convinced that Ignatian Spirituality works very well for both women and men who find themselves pressed for time. Saint Ignatius emphasizes the use of the imagination in prayer, especially when praying with the gospels, placing ourselves in the scene, making the passage come alive. The "colloquy," or conversation with Jesus is essential to this spirituality. The daily "examen," or review, is also a time-tested method of reflecting back on the last 12-24 hours to see where God has been at work in our lives, how we have cooperated and not cooperated with God's grace.

Though when you read this column, the feast of Saint Ignatius will have passed, you might consider investigating the approach of this saint further. As a place to begin, try looking at ignatianspirituality.com. It is not the only spirituality, just one that works for me.

There are many other great spiritualities in the Church each with long histories and perspectives contributing greatly to the Tradition of the Catholic faith. Some of the most influential spiritualities are the Franciscan, Carmelite, Dominican, and of course Benedictine whose order founded these parishes of Holy Rosary and Visitation. What matters in the end is not what spirituality we practice but the one that draws us closer and closer to our Lord Jesus Christ into the fullness of our Catholic faith.

In God's great love, hope, and mercy,

Deacon Jim