



St. Ignatius of Loyola

Born: 1491 at Loyola, Guipuzcoa, Spain as Inigo Lopez de Loyola

Died: 31 July 1556 at Rome, Italy of fever

Canonized: 12 March 1622 by Pope Gregory XV

Patronage: soldiers, Jesuit Order, Jesuits, Society of Jesus, retreats (proclaimed on 25 July 1922 by Pope Pius XI), Spiritual Exercises (by Pope Pius XI), Basque country, diocese of Bilbao, Spain, military ordinariate of the Philippines, Álava, Spain, Bizkaia, Spain, Gipuzkoa, Spain, Guipuzcoa, Spain, Guipúzcoa, Spain, Vizcaya, Spain.

Also known as Inigo Lopez de Loyola. Born to the Spanish nobility. Youngest of twelve children. Page in the Spanish court of Ferdinand and Isabella. Military education. Soldier, entering the army in 1517, and serving in several campaigns. Wounded in the leg by a cannonball at the siege of Pampeluna on 20 May 1521, an injury that left him partially crippled for life. During his recuperation the only books he had access to were *The Golden Legend*, a collection of biographies of the saints, and *The Life of Christ* by Ludolph the Carthusian. These books, and the time spent in contemplation, changed him. On his recovery he took a vow of chastity, hung his sword before the altar of the Virgin of Montserrat, and donned a pilgrim's robes. He lived in a cave from 1522 to 1523, contemplating the way to live a Christian life. Pilgrim to Rome and the Holy Land in 1523, where he worked to convert Muslims. In 1528 he began studying theology in Barcelona and Alcalá in Spain, and Paris, France receiving his degree on 14 March 1534. His meditations, prayers, visions and insights led to forming the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus on 15 August 1534; it received papal approval in 1541. Friend of James Lainez, Alonso Salmerón, Nicholas Bobadilla, Simón Rodríguez, Blessed Peter Faber, and Saint Francis Xavier, the group that formed the core of the new Society. He never used the term Jesuit, which was coined as an insult by his opponents; the Society today uses the term with pride. He travelled Europe and the Holy Lands, then settled in Rome to direct the Jesuits. His health suffered in later years, and he was nearly blind at death. The Jesuits today have over 500 universities and colleges, 30,000 members, and teach over 200,000 students each year.

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