

BULLETIN INSERT

Parish Lenten Retreat

"Deus ibi est"

"God is There"

Where Charity and Love are, God is There.

Ubi Caritas et Amore, Deus ibi est.

IGNATION SPIRITUALITY BULLETIN INSERT WEEK 1

Faith for a Lifetime
(Adapted from a Loyola Press Article)

"The desire for God is written in the human heart." (CCC 27)

Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) was born in northern Spain to an aristocratic family. He was trained to be a courtier, a nobleman in the service of the Spanish royalty. While in this service, he was wounded in battle. During his period of recovery, he read a book on the lives of the saints and a four-volume life of Jesus Christ. The reading led him to reassess his life and dedicate himself to the service of God.

This period of recovery was also a time of personal transformation. Ignatius experienced the goodness of God infusing his life and all of creation. He developed the *Spiritual Exercises*, a guide for his personal reflection and a means to help others to discern the presence of God in their lives. Eventually he and a group of companions gathered to dedicate their lives to God and the Church; they became the founding group of the Society of Jesus, often called the Jesuits.

Ignatius and his companions realized that God was calling them to care for a world that seemed to be falling apart. The Church was in need of reform. People were in need of direction to discover what it meant to live in a relationship with God and others. Ignatius's contribution is relevant for our time as well as his own.

What are the fundamentals of what Ignatius offered? The following points were adapted from the Ignatian Partners Web site: (formerly at www.ignatianpartners.org)

A conviction of the value of the human person as created by God

A desire to find the voice of God in and through the ordinary events of the day

An understanding of oneself as an agent of change in the world

A commitment to a life of justice

An outreach to people who are in need or excluded from society

Theologian Monica Helwig comments, "Perhaps most characteristic of all, the whole [Ignatian Spirituality] process is geared to consciousness raising of the individual..., to be alert to one's own motivations and inclinations, and to learn to discern what is the voice of the Holy Spirit of God and what is the voice of a spirit that is counter to God's spirit, a spirit of destruction and disorientation."

Ignatius was transformed by the notion that God loved him, redeemed him, and could be encountered in everything around him. He learned to trust his instincts and inclinations as well as his creativity. He found a purpose and meaning that illuminated his life and inspired his days. Through his writings Saint Ignatius of Loyola continues to offer us insights today for our journey with God.

(over)

The Examen

(Based on an original article by Fr. George Aschenbrenner SJ)

We are aware that the Father is continually drawing each one of us to Himself in and through Christ. We experience his action in our feelings, moods, impulses and desires.

God reveals Himself in our feelings as much as He does in our clear and distinct ideas. If we want to find God more intimately we must let Him draw us at the core of our being, which means becoming more aware of our feelings. Here we recognize God's ceaseless invitation to come closer, to be more like Him, to be at one with Him. We are also conscious of the resistance to Him, which arises from sin in ourselves and in the world about us.

Which of my feelings and moods are leading me to God?

Which of my feelings and moods are leading me away from Him?

We are not talking about feelings on the surface, but about movements deep in our hearts, where God has placed His Word. If we stay away from the depths where we are truly ourselves, we shall miss much that the Spirit is saying to us. At the level of our deeper and more lasting feelings we discover ourselves and our real relationship with God. We see what has to be faced, understood, decided and acted upon.

There are times when each of us has to face such questions as:

Is God real? What does Jesus mean to me?

The answers we give from the heart make us more mature and give us a clearer idea of our identity and our relationship with God. Some moments of renewed conviction can be described as a deep-felt, personal experience of faith. These are times when we surrender to God. To begin with there may be fear, but peace and joy eventually tell me that God makes His home in me and I make my home in Him.

I have to learn to take each present experience and to place it at a level where I am trying to live out my complete surrender to God. If my present preoccupations fit into the deeper attitude of surrender there will be a sense of harmony, peace and joy. If I experience disturbance, anxiety or sadness I am not at home with God and I am going in the wrong direction.

We have to be in touch with our feelings in order to sort them out and avoid being blown about by them. The Examen is a good way of knowing my true self and after the Eucharist it provides one of the best opportunities for a daily, intimate meeting with Christ.

How am I drawn to God today: a friend, an event, a book, the beauty of nature?

What am I learning anything about God and God's ways: in ordinary occasions, spare moments?

How did I meet Him in: fear, joy, work, misunderstanding, weariness, suffering?

Does His Word come alive in: prayer, Scriptures, liturgy?

Do I bring Christ to my community? Do they bring Christ to me?

Have I been a sign of God's presence and love to the people I met today?

How do I go out to: the lonely, the sorrowful, the discouraged, the needy?

Am I aware of God's work in my own locality, my county, in other nations of the world,
in the Church at large?

Do I have a keener sense of being loved, of sinfulness, of desire to give back what I have
received, of dependence?

Is there some part of my life still untouched by Jesus Christ and where He is calling me to a
change of heart?

How is God with me in this moment?