

Pastor's Message, St. Pius Sunday Bulletin of July 31, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

As you read these words, I am in Ljubljana, Slovenia where it is St. Ignatius Day. I am gathering with the Slovene Jesuits and the faithful to celebrate mass with Archbishop Alojzij Cviki, S.J., the Jesuit archbishop of Maribor, the second largest city in the country. I am being hosted by my very good friend, Fr. Miran Zvanut, S.J., who is the provincial of the Slovene Province. This is my first visit in a few years and I feel a special bond with the Slovene and Croatian Jesuits who are like brothers as well as friends to me. I am always renewed by the sense of comradery and fellowship I enjoy with these brothers and their lay collaborators. When I last visited on St. Ignatius Day in 2017 when Father Miran took his Final Vows, almost a thousand people attended the mass at the historic St. Joseph Church! Technically, since this is a Sunday and no saints feasts fall on Sundays, the Feast of St. Ignatius Loyola is not celebrated this year in the liturgy. It is the Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. That withstanding, it is a privilege and blessing to celebrate this day with my Jesuit brothers and their community.

One of the reasons why I hold St. Ignatius Loyola close to my heart and why he has greatly influenced my life is his compelling conversion story. Like many boys, he dreamed of a valiant military career, and as a member of a noble family in the Basque region of Spain, he desired a life of chivalry and importance. He was intensely vain and self-centered, and much of his thought and preoccupation centered on building himself up. As fate and grace would have it, he was seriously injured in a famous battle of Pamplona between French and Spanish armies. A cannonball ripped through one of his legs and he endured a long and painful convalescence.

He was cared for by two aunts; when he would ask for books on military matters, they only gave him a bible and Lives of the Saints to read. He noticed interior stirrings wherein he wanted to emulate the heroic virtues of the saints. When he would think of worldly things, he would feel happy but eventually that sentiment would give way to desolation; however, when he reflected on spiritual matters and prayer, a deep consolation would overcome him for long periods. This eventually led to his devising the spiritual exercise of **discernment of spirits**. This is one of the great contributions Ignatius made to the spiritual life. His conversion experience led him to dedicate himself to the spiritual life.

In a spirit of humility, he studied for the priesthood in Paris and eventually founded the Compania de Jesus, or the Society of Jesus. Saints Francis Xavier and Peter Fabre were among his first companions in the formation of the Society. Many Jesuits have been elevated to sainthood, including St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, St. John Berchmans, and St. Peter Claver. The Jesuits have contributed magnificently to human history and to the Church; they greatly influence education, the social sciences, and retreat work and spiritual direction. On this day I pray especially for the many Jesuits who have influenced my life, among them the late Fathers Tom McCormick, Robert Walsh, Tony Sauer, Daniel O'Sullivan, and I am grateful for the continued friendship of Brother Douglas Draper and so many others. Each day, I thank God for bringing me the gift of Jesuit spirituality and the many sons of St. Ignatius who have changed my life for the better!

There are two well-known prayers devised by St. Ignatius Loyola I would like to share with you. I pray these words help draw you closer to the heart of Jesus and to discover the immensity of his love and grace.

Suscipe

Take Lord, receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To thee, O Lord, I return it.

All is thine, dispose of it wholly According to Thy will.

Give me only Thy love and Thy grace, For this is sufficient for me.

Prayer for Generosity

Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous; Teach me to serve you as you deserve,

To give and not to count the cost, To fight and not to heed the wounds,

To toil and not to seek for rest, To labor and not to seek for reward,

Save that of knowing I am doing Your will.

In light of this reflection on the life of St. Ignatius Loyola, today's Gospel from St. Luke illuminates placing our desires and aspirations, indeed our very selves at the disposition of God. Jesus told the parable of the rich man who had such a bountiful harvest that he built a larger storage space and then rested on his laurels. "I shall say to myself, 'Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, and be merry!'" Jesus rebuked him and pointed out his foolishness. The rich man supposed that he would live a long life and have no cares. If our lives are guided this motif of self-satisfaction and greed, what does this gain us? Material things can easily be taken away from us; we can experience health challenges which can limit. Jesus advises us to live in the richness of God's love, for this can never be taken away from us. No matter what fortune or misfortune befalls us, if we have deep roots in the spiritual life, we can surrender ourselves to God's will. In so doing, we can experience a consolation and peace that the treasures of this earthly life cannot give.

Please mark on your calendar: Mass of the Holy Spirit, Sunday August 21st at 9:30am. Father Gary Thomas of St. Patrick Seminary will be Celebrant and homilist. We will also have the Installation of our new school principal, Mr. James Brandt. There will be a reception following Mass in front of the church. Let us gather to bless our new school year, our administration, faculty and staff, students and their families, and our parish community! May we continue to strive, to seek, to find God's love and grace in all we do!