

**St Mary's, Inverness**  
The RC Diocese of Aberdeen: SC005122]  
**The Year of St Ignatius**  
20 MAY 2021 >31 JULY 2022

**FIFTY-SIXTH IGNATIAN REFLECTION**  
**THE IMPACT OF IGNATIUS : ALOYSIUS GONZAGA**



The story of Ignatius, his own conversion and the way in which he attracted others to follow Jesus was becoming well-known. He was an attractive personality, ardent in faith yet humble in manner and through his conversations and his way of life he gathered others. From the original three, Ignatius, Peter Favre, and Francis Xavier there were four others who made their vows at Montmartre in Paris on the Feast of the Assumption, 15 Aug 1534. Thereafter we see a growing number of men undertaking the Spiritual Exercises and offering their lives as Companions of Jesus. When these companions were recognised as the Society of Jesus in September 1540 there was a steady increase in numbers, particularly among the better educated and the sons of the nobility. On 14 March 1544 the Society of Jesus was again confirmed

and the restriction on its size was removed [originally only up to sixty members]. Within a few years Portugal and Spain became separate Provinces. Missions were established in the east [Japan, India and looking to begin in China], and also in South America. Within Europe the Jesuits were engaged in the counter-reformation. These were exciting times; by 1548, *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola* had been given papal approval by Pope Paul III and the book was being printed in Rome. Printing was a fairly new process and the availability of printed texts greatly enhanced the teaching and spiritual guidance given by the Companions.

In 1554 the building of the new Jesuit church, the Gesu, was begun. By this time Fr Geronimo Nadal was elected and confirmed as a Vicar-General to assist Ignatius.

The Society was expanding : France had become a province, and Fr Peter Canisius, the leading theologian at the Council of Trent became the Provincial in Germany.

From its early days the young Society was actively involved in education, founding schools and colleges. Among the early Jesuits, there were many preachers and catechists, devoting themselves to the care of the young. They cared for the sick, prisoners, prostitutes, soldiers, and many who were social outcasts. Many of the companions were adept in giving of *The Spiritual Exercises* which frequently meant that they became the confessors and spiritual guides to many aristocratic families, and some of the royal and ruling families in Europe. By the time of Ignatius' death in 1556 more than one thousand Jesuits were active in mission within Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. Ignatius died in his little study-bedroom at the headquarters beside the Gesu.



He was buried in the Church of Our Lady della Strada, which in time was incorporated into the Gesu.

As was seen the impact of Ignatius by the time of his death was considerable. Twelve years after his death, on 9 March 1568 a son was born to Ferrante Gonzaga, the Marquis di Castiglione.



The Gonzaga Palace at Mantua where Aloysius the first of seven children, was reared and educated before continuing his education at the court in Florence. This and the expectations of the Mantua aristocrats prepared him for a life of service within the Royal families of Europe. Born to privilege he had become a Page to the son of King Philip II of Spain. When he was only seventeen years of age, influenced by books about the Jesuit missions in India he decided to become a Jesuit. Resigning his inheritance was not easy, as he faced strong opposition from his father, who wanted military prestige for his son and a life of familiarity with the royal courts. The Dukes of Mantua were from the Gonzaga family. In Lombardy they were held in considerable social esteem.

Aloysius at the age of seventeen, a courtier, yet he felt called to a life of service in the Society of Jesus. Aloysius never quite fitted his father's aspirations. When he was only seven years old he had become aware of a deepening religious attraction and his sense of faith was growing. He was quite precocious in his prayer life, saying the Office of Mary, and reciting the psalms.



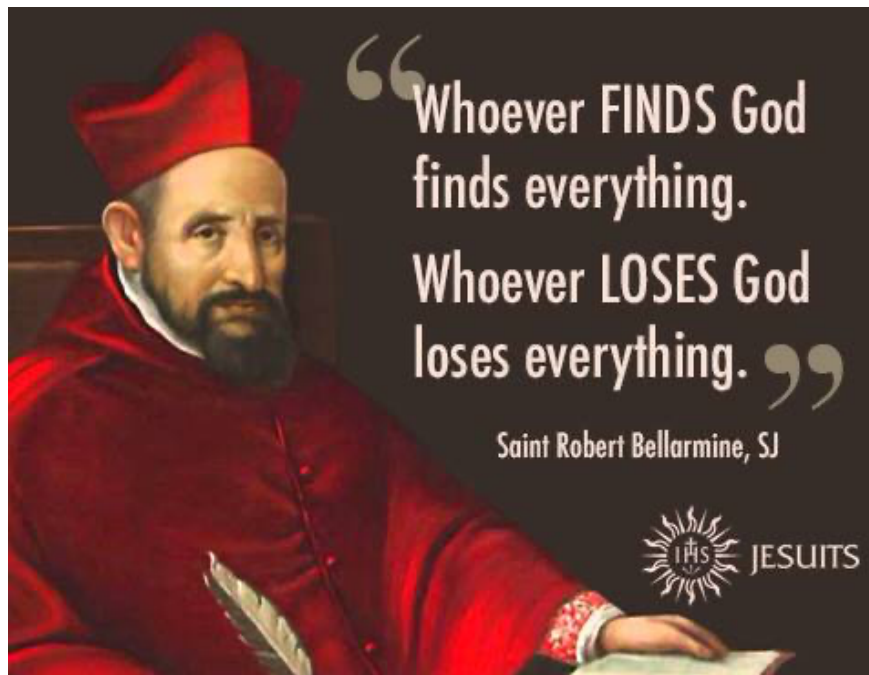


Aloysius was being drawn into a closer relationship with God. When he was in Florence for his schooling in the Court he began teaching the Catechism to poor children. By the age of thirteen the Gonzaga family were with the Empress of Austria at the Court of King Philip II. The eyes of the religiously sensitive Aloysius were opened to the vainglorious, and lax lifestyles among the Courtiers. Like Ignatius Loyola, when he was experiencing a change in his direction in life, the young Gonzaga began reading the lives of the saints. The missionary endeavours of the Jesuits in India, begun by the energetic Francis Xavier, influenced Aloysius. This brought about the struggle with his father for over four years before he was allowed to renounce his right to succession and become a Jesuit.



The Superior General, Claudio Acquaviva, admitted him to the novitiate of Sant' Andrea.

His Spiritual Director and guide during his four year novitiate when he studied philosophy was the renowned Catholic apologist, Robert Bellarmine.



Robert Bellarmine was born in 1542 into a somewhat impoverished family of the lesser Italian nobility. He became a Jesuit as a young man and was soon caught up in the theological controversies of the day. In time he became a professor at the Roman College [the Jesuit University in Rome, later called the Gregorian University]. He was a distinguished theologian and a dedicated spokesman for the renewed and reformed Catholicism of the Council of Trent. His spiritual guidance of Aloysius ensured that the generous-hearted young novice did not spend an excessive amount of time on prayers and austere devotions. This recalls the influence on the young Ignatius at Manresa when his austerities were regulated and a balanced approach to prayer enabled him to grow and develop his insights. Through *The Spiritual Exercises* the experiences of Ignatius and his insights into faith and spiritual discernment shaped generations of young men.

Aloysius Gonzaga would have been aware of some parallels between his own life and that of Ignatius in the journey in faith, pilgrims with Jesus. Each of them had eschewed lives of privilege on finding the deeper awareness of God. Each of them embarked on a life of study.

For Aloysius Gonzaga his formation in faith was deepened when, in 1591, the plague arrived in Rome. It spread rapidly especially among the poor. It was accompanied by acute shortages of food. For the poor this was a time of famine. To serve the many suffering people the Jesuits opened a hospital in which the Superior-General Claudio Acquaviva, and many other Jesuits, treated patients nursing and washing them. Aloysius was in the forefront of these charitable endeavours, begging alms to feed and care for the poor victims. Feeding, washing, changing beds, getting them Holy Communion was fatiguing and demanding.



He told his spiritual director, Robert Bellarmine about a premonition that he would die soon. It was dangerous work and in time the young Aloysius became infected. While he seemed to recover there was a persistent fever and he never regained strength. During this protracted period Aloysius maintained his discipline of prayer. He died three months later at the age of twenty-three on 21 June 1591.

Since then his cause for Beatification was promoted by Robert Bellarmine. Eventually in 1726 he was canonised. St Aloysius Gonzaga has become the pre-eminent patron-saint for Catholic young people. Since his own life time he has been an inspiration to many during times of plague and pestilence. He is also the patron saint of Jesuits in formation, novices, scholastics and those affected by Aids, whether victims or carers.

### **Ponder :**

- In age of poor communications, with printing in its infancy, and travel by road and sea being dangerous and difficult, yet the impact of the Ignatian wave of conversions was enormous.
- In our age with so many modes of communication, radio, television, telephones, Ipads, computers, and in travel we have excellent roads, the ability to fly, sail and go by rail, yet the Gospel sometimes is muted. The question each of us faces is how do I spread the 'good news'? It is probably true that living faith is 'caught rather than taught' – how are we doing? Exemplary faith attracts, wholesome conversation can be persuasive, human kindness kindles cords of affection.
- Jesus with two, then four, then twelve, then seventy-two, then the five hundred and the thousands. Ignatius with the two, then the six, then the growth to thousands. The inner conviction, speaking with authority, acting with integrity, sharing the burdens of others, these may be markers for us as we seek the confidence to 'gossip the



gospel', and bring others to know and love Jesus in Word and Sacrament.

- Aloysius was innocent yet perceptive, devout yet practical. Our young people may need protection from all that corrodes innocence, support in prayerful devotion and in developing practical charity. Work among young people is a major priority. People will be able to respond to this as they are able : some will pray, some will give financial support to work with the young, others will consider teaching/catechesis or sharing in Pilgrimages.



#### A Prayer :

*Dear Lord, we thank You for giving us St. Aloysius Gonzaga as an example of holiness. Help us to imitate the love of You that he showed throughout his life, beginning in his youth.*

*St. Aloysius Gonzaga, you began your journey to holiness when you were very young. As you were recovering from an illness, you turned your attention to prayer and study of the saints. From then on, you grew in devotion to God.*

*You were committed to chastity, and you longed to serve God as a missionary. Though you were still young, you did all you could to prepare yourself for a life of service to God.*

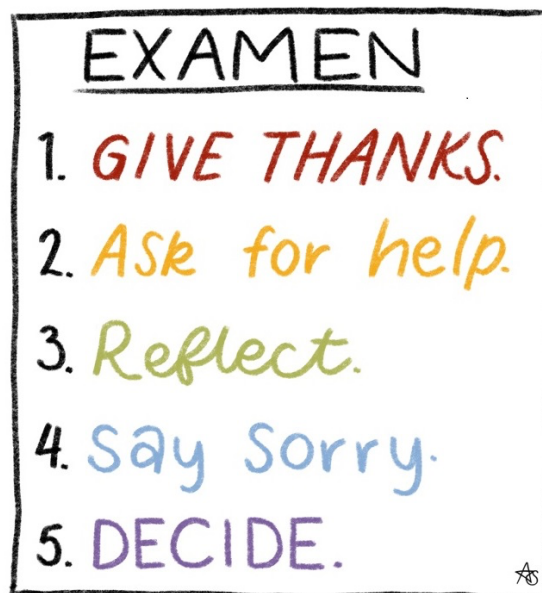
*Pray for me, that I may always seek to serve God in my life. Pray that I may do all I can to serve God in whatever ways He calls me.*

*St. Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us!*

## EXAMINATION OF OUR LIVES [THE EXAMEN]

### Daily Examen:

Looking with quiet sincerity and simplicity of heart at the day



### GETTING READY FOR THE GIFT OF SCRIPTURE

- We ask the Holy Spirit to settle our minds and open our hearts.
- Our conversation with God begins as we express our gratitude for our blessings and by expressing our sorrow for personal sin.
- We ask that The Holy Spirit may enliven our reading and understanding. *Come, Holy Spirit, our souls inspire and lighten with celestial fire;*

- We place ourselves into the scene of the Scripture : what we see, what we hear, what it feels like, what we smell, what we might taste.
- Reading silently or aloud we form the words as they take shape in our creative imagination.

**Passage of Scripture for Reflection :      Mark 9.33-37**

*<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup>And they [the disciples] came to Caper'na-um; and when he [Jesus] was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" <sup>34</sup> But they were silent; for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup> And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them, "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." <sup>36</sup> And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."*

**Points for Reflection:**

- Jesus asks each of us : "What are you talking about?" Is our conversation always suitable for expressing our faith?
- Are we limited by vainglorious notions of superiority?
- Humble service is costly, yet it is the way of Jesus.
- The Child, the young person is forever welcome and may lead us to a deeper faith, in 'the name of Jesus'.



**Conversational prayer :**

*. Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

**Silence and peaceful recollection**

*Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and 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 Thy love and thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.*



***Jesus Mercy, Mary Pray***

***Praise God Always***