

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

FIFTY-NINTH IGNATIAN REFLECTION
IGNATIUS : HIS IMPACT ON MISSIONS - TO MEXICO



Ignatius (born Iñigo Lopez de Loyola) was born in 1491 at Loyola Castle, in the Basque Country, of northern Spain. The family were well connected nobility with relations in important post in the royal courts. His education was rudimentary and his young days were spent in the acquisition of contacts and experience in the service of the aristocracy and royalty. In his 'Autobiography' Ignatius reminisced about himself :

' ... a man given over to the vanities of the world, and took a special delight in the exercise of arms, with a great and vain desire of winning glory'.

From royal courts to the battlefield he was intent on making a name for himself. When he was twenty-six years of age, in the service of King Ferdinand of Spain, while defending the town citadel of Pamplona against a French Army, Ignatius was wounded by an enemy cannon ball that shattered one leg and injured the other.



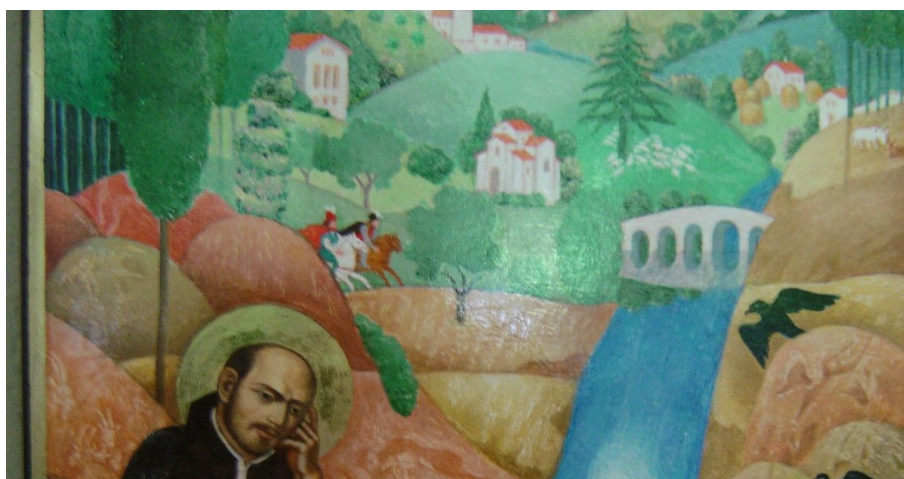
Ignatius spent the following eight months convalescing from a series of operations to mend his broken leg. He had wanted to read tales of chivalry and romance but in the family home at Loyola, where he was being cared for by his sister-in-law, the only books available were "The Life of Christ", and the lives of saints. As he read these he was awakened to new dreams and hopes for the future, as he wrote of himself in the Autobiography:

'For, while reading the lives of Our Lord and the saints, he would stop to think, reasoning with himself: 'How would it be, if I did this which St Francis did, and this which St Dominic did?''

During this time of reflection Ignatius became aware of spiritual awakenings within himself: ***'... from some thoughts he would be left sad and from others happy, and little by little coming to know the difference in kind of spirits that were stirring: the one from the devil, and the other from God.'***

Ignatius gradually discovered that the values and experiences of his former life no longer brought him feelings of joy. On the contrary he also observed that a new way of life, trying to follow the saints, hoping to live the life of a saint, gave him a better feeling. A new dream, of being an evangelist and doing good works for God and Mary, gave him greater hope. The idea of walking barefoot to Jerusalem raised his spirits, taking the place of the vain notions of worldly success as a gentleman-at-arms or a courtier.

Ignatius was a profound interpreter of his own psychological movements, observing what made him feel consoled and strengthened and that which left him desolated, bewildered and lost.



He made notes of his experiences and insights, including his illuminations by the River Cardener, at Manresa when Ignatius began a profound relationship with God, in which he described himself as *The Pilgrim*, a new journey with Jesus as his Master and Lord.

The observations and insights of this period were formative and Ignatius recorded them in what became *The Spiritual Exercises*.

This was to be a manual of prayerful evangelising as Ignatius attracted others to share his Pilgrim journey.

The Spiritual Exercises were approved by Pope Paul III on 31 July 1548, and in the hands of Ignatius' new associates, Companions of Jesus, they were highly effective in bringing many thousands of men and women into a new and reformed Catholicism, with a highly developed sense of Mission. The Society of Jesus was confirmed, ratified and approved in 1540, and again in 1544 establishing it as a society with special faculties and privileges by the Papacy.

Mission was an early imperative. With Ignatius as the General Superior so began the Missionary imperative:

Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam

For the greater glory of God and serving the least of the brothers and sisters of the world :
The Missions of the Ignatian enterprise.

St Francis Xavier and the East Indies : Xavier had been sent to India earlier in the year of



the Society's formation. India, the Far Eastern Islands, Japan and China were his territory. He died in 1552 before he could reach China.

The China Mission was initiated some years afterwards by other Jesuits, notably Matteo Ricci and Michael Ruggeri who entered China in 1583.



The Mission to South America was begun in 1549 with Jesuit missionaries arriving in Brazil headed by Manuel de Nóbrega. A few years later José de Anchieta arrived. Anchieta became Nóbrega's right-hand man. Together, they built the first "aldeia" – a large settlement where Christian 'Tupi', [native peoples identified by the language], lived, farmed, and where the children were educated by the Jesuits. The first settlement, Aldeia de Piratininga, is known today as Sao Paulo, the largest city in Brazil.

The Mission to Mexico :



Aztec Emperor



Hernan Cortes

After the discovery of the Americas by Christopher Columbus in 1492 The Spanish began a period of conquest in the new territories which as well as settling Spanish colonies for wealth creation also brought the evangelising Mission of conversion to Catholicism.

Conquistadores like Hernan Cortes who brought down the Aztec Empire by defeating the Aztec emperors in a series of battles settled the area for the Spanish crown. The territory was named as "New Spain" with its capital in Mexico City on

the site of the former capital of the Aztec Empire. From these base journeys of exploration began through what is now known as Central America.

The first Viceroy, from 1535, of "The Vice Royalty of New Spain was Antonio de Mendoza y Pacheco. The evangelisation of New Spain had begun in 1524 with several Franciscan missions, followed two years later in 1526 by the Dominicans and in 1533 by the Augustinians. By 1570 about one hundred and fifty missions had been established.



The first Jesuits arrived in 1572 at a time that was favourable to their missionary purpose which was primarily to create schools and educate the children. From these beginnings the Jesuits reached out to the parents and relatives. Soon other pastoral work was being

undertaken in new areas of mission.

The pattern of Mission was similar to that elsewhere : build a Mission around a school or college. These Mission bases became places of shelter from the depredations of settlers and the heavy-handedness of colonial officials. In addition to that they became centres for learning new trades and developing business enterprises. Around a Mission towns quickly developed.

By 1645 there were four hundred and one Jesuits in Mexico, caring for about eighteen colleges, each with more than six subjects on its curriculum. From these further parishes and other Missions were established. This expansion was not



always unimpeded : various groups of native peoples rejected the missionary activity and were determined to kill the newcomers.

In areas populated by primitive tribes, outside the Aztec Empire and the areas 'pacified' by the Spanish Crown, the Jesuits'

missions were watered with the **blood of martyrdom**. This was the case in the missions of Sinaloa, Chínipas, Tepehuenes, Tarahumara, Pimería and California.

Sinaloa Mission

The Sinaloa region, in north-western Mexico, was very wild at the end of the sixteenth century nevertheless the Jesuits established a Mission there.



The Indians had not been part of the Aztec Empire. They lived in primitive conditions, being mostly naked, wearing their hair very long. For accommodation they built huts raised on poles to keep themselves safe from marauders whether animal or human.

There does not seem to have been any arts or culture, nor was there any evidence of religious faith or cultic practice. It was a polygamous society, with little in the way of social or political structure, and one in which several languages could be found within the same settlements. It was a difficult and barbaric way of life.

The historian Pérez de Ribas said, *"the joys of these nations was to kill people."*

Armed with bows, clubs and spiked sticks, they danced around their dead enemies. In the remote mountainous regions cannibalism was widespread – eating the dead victims of their violence.

In 1590, Governor Rodrigo del Río y Loza asked the Society of Jesus for missionaries to venture into that hazardous region.

Chinipas Mission

The Chínipas region, borders Sinaloa and Sonora, in the southwest of what is now the state of Chihuahua [*small dogs from there!*]. In 1610, a Spanish soldier, Captain Hurdaide, passed through the hostile and belligerent tribal areas and established a Fort at Montesclaros.



A Jesuit mission in Chínipas.

This fort was built of mudbricks [adobe] and it had a tower on each corner of the building. The Chinipas people were impressed by this feat of architecture and made contact with the captain of the fort. They had heard about the Jesuit missions and they sought a Jesuit missionary priest for themselves. As a consequence the Jesuit priest, Fr Villalta, was sent into the area. He was well received. He began a missionary apostolate of preaching, baptising, and converting the native people from paths of violence.

As evidence of their forswearing violence the local chiefs [caciques] gathered together their collections of the skulls of defeated enemies, and all other symbols of sorcery and superstition, and brought them to the Mission. Everything was burned, cleansing fire at its priest-like task.

Father Castani, Villalta's successor, continued and extended the missionary work in the area. Peace was established between the different previously warring native tribes, and gradually the country was opened-up as the neighbours became Christians.

Tepehuan Mission

The Jesuit, Fr Jerónimo Ramírez, a native of Seville, went to Mexico in 1584. He learned different Mexican languages, and after a few years of mission in different areas he entered, without any escort, into the Tepehuan. He had already learned something of that language.



The Tepehuanes were strong warriors, greatly feared by their neighbours. To placate them the neighbouring tribes handed over their young women to these brawny, forceful yet cheerful people. Most of them were corn-farmers as corn was their staple food. Their houses were constructed of wood, stone and mud.

Fr Ramirez was well received and popular and enjoyed co-operation from the local leaders. He established a centre at Santiago Papasquiaro where people of different ethnic backgrounds could meet. This was important as there were natives, people of mixed-race, and settlers from Europe.

Tarahumara Mission

The Tarahumares or Rarámuri Indians, are known as they " of the light feet." Clearly fleet of foot and formidable opponents.



Jesuit mission in the Tarahumara region.

The Tarahumares are still one of the most characteristic indigenous groups in Mexico. In the days of the *conquistadores* and the Jesuit Missions these native peoples wore loincloths, coloured sashes and wide headbands to contain their long hair. They have remained formidable walkers and runners. These attributes were useful as they were hunters and fishermen skilled in the use of bows and arrows and slings. Their arrows were tipped with poisons further adding to their fearsome reputation.

Living in caves and huts along the riverbanks these people worked hard in raising poultry, tending sheep, and weaving wool.

In their religious practices they worshipped the sun and the stars. Magic and superstitious practices sustained their collective life. At their festivals much alcohol was shared and drunkenness was common.

Some regard the Jesuits' missions and their evangelisation of the Tarahumares as the most heroic of their Mexican missions.

Thoroughly nurtured by conversion and Catholic devotion and practice the Jesuits established almost two hundred towns in one hundred and fifty years among the Tarahumares.

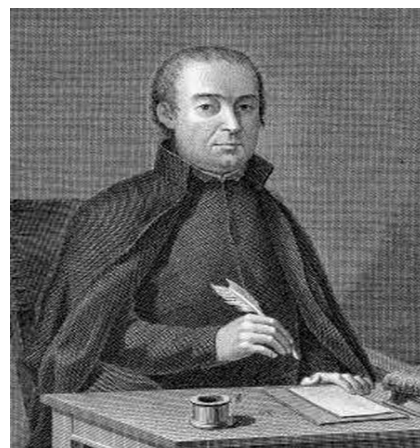
Pimeria Mission



Father Eusebio Kino (1645-1711)

The first and main evangelizer of the Alta Pimería region of Northwest Mexico was Father Eusebio Kino. He was born in 1645 into the nobility of the Alto Adige at Segno - the Chini family. When he became a missionary overseas he amended his surname to the simpler 'Kino'.

In 1679, the Spanish Crown had given orders to populate the island of California – partly due to fears that the English privateer/pirate and explorer Sir Francis Drake was using the territory. At the beginning of 1681, at the age of thirty-six Father Kino arrived in Mexico. Two years later he was commissioned to travel to the Alta Pimeria region and from there to proceed to the island of California. With one hundred men who were to settle, colonise and map the island he set out with Fr Pedro Matías Goñi and Father Juan Bautista Copart. They anchored in La Paz, to the south of the peninsula, and later in another cove that they called San Bruno.



It was to be a gruelling mission. The native Californians were nomadic, sleeping on the ground and moving every two or three days. They were mostly naked, the women having a form of belt. Being nomads there were no buildings. To survive they were foragers eating what they could find : roots, small seeds, some fish or meat, insects such as crickets, grubs, caterpillars, bats, snakes, mice, and lizards.

Their family and social relations were unstructured and being a male dominated society the men took women as they wanted even from among their own daughters. Such people had no form of organised social or religious life. Communication was difficult as there were several different language groups.

The total population was about forty thousand natives in the entire peninsula who were observed to be 'usually dirty, clumsy and lazy'.

That land and its population were deeply unattractive. It was said that only the Jesuit missionaries could seek it and love it, since they were seeking only the glory of God and the temporal and eternal well-being of the natives.

The Jesuits, in 1697, embarked on their mission for the greater glory of God, and to serve the brothers and sisters of the native population : "What you did to one of these my least brothers, you did to me" (Mt 25:40).

In the decades that followed, even after the blood of martyrs was shed, after much hard work and suffering from the harsh conditions, the Missions were places of relative peace and tranquillity. Education and conversion continued.

The Demise:

The Jesuit Missions in Mexico were curtailed in 1767 when King Carlos, because of political intrigue among the royal courts of Europe, expelled the Jesuits. By that time there were about twelve thousand indigenous people gathered in the eighteen Missions.

The same had been happening elsewhere: the Portuguese Imperial authorities expelled Jesuits from their possessions who left Brazil in 1759. The French court withdrew the Jesuits from the Americas in 1762.

When the Jesuits were leaving Mexico they had obtained permission to visit the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe.



Large crowds of Mexican converts gathered at the inn where they were staying wanting to greet them. A Polish Jesuit, Fr Sterkianowski, who was present wrote

"The enthusiasm with which they came to visit us from Mexico seemed incredible. If I tried to exaggerate, I would not do so."

The Jesuit historian Fr Peter M Dunne SJ says that shortly before Christmas, together with other Jesuits who came from Argentina and Peru, "***they left sick and sad, leaving the New World forever. They left America to live and die in exile, far from their beloved missions and of his sons and daughters, his neophytes***".

The expulsion of the Society of Jesus, decreed by King Carlos III, was part of a conspiracy of colonial powers, principally the Portuguese and the Spanish, to remove the Jesuits because the economic interests of the plantation owners were threatened. The colonial settlers had become exasperated by the Jesuits' defence of the natives, preventing the exploitation of their labour. The Jesuits operated a benign and paternal form of 'commonwealth' in which there was regard for individual dignity, a sharing of resources and the fruits of the communal effort. The Jesuit defence of the native people and their educational and catechetical work formed an indigenous Catholic society that was a threat to the colonial enterprises. The tensions of this period are evocatively portrayed in the film, "The Mission" of 1983.

The evangelizing project of the Jesuits promoted an indigenous society independent of New Spain, which did not allow the Indians to submit to them by force.



Points to ponder :

- **A time-line**

1534 : Aug Ignatius, Faber and Francis Xavier with others vow themselves to chastity, poverty and obedience

1540 : Mar -Francis Xavier departs for India

1540 : Sep - The Society of Jesus approved

1544 : Mar - Society of Jesus confirmed

1546 : Aug - Peter Faber dies in Rome

1549 : Feb - First Jesuits in Brazil

1552 : Sep - Francis Xavier dies in sight of China

1556 : Jul - Ignatius dies in Rome

1572 : - Jesuits arrive in Mexico

1583 - Jesuits arrive in China

The life of Ignatius and his friendship with Peter Faber and Francis Xavier had a huge impact on the modern world. The newly formed Society of Jesus was well placed to face the issues:

- the geographical frontiers of the world were being explored
- the new technology of the printing press was being developed
- the European powers were exploring and colonising
- new ideas in understanding scripture and 'humanism' [fresh philosophical insights derived from the recently discovered classical writers] were being explored

- the authority of the Catholic Church was threatened from within and without [reforming thinkers and emergent Protestantism]
- resurgent economic nationalism was threatening the political stability of Europe [new nation-states emerging].

We should attempt to assess our own understanding of these times through the lives of those involved in every area of the Ignatian apostolate.

Asking :

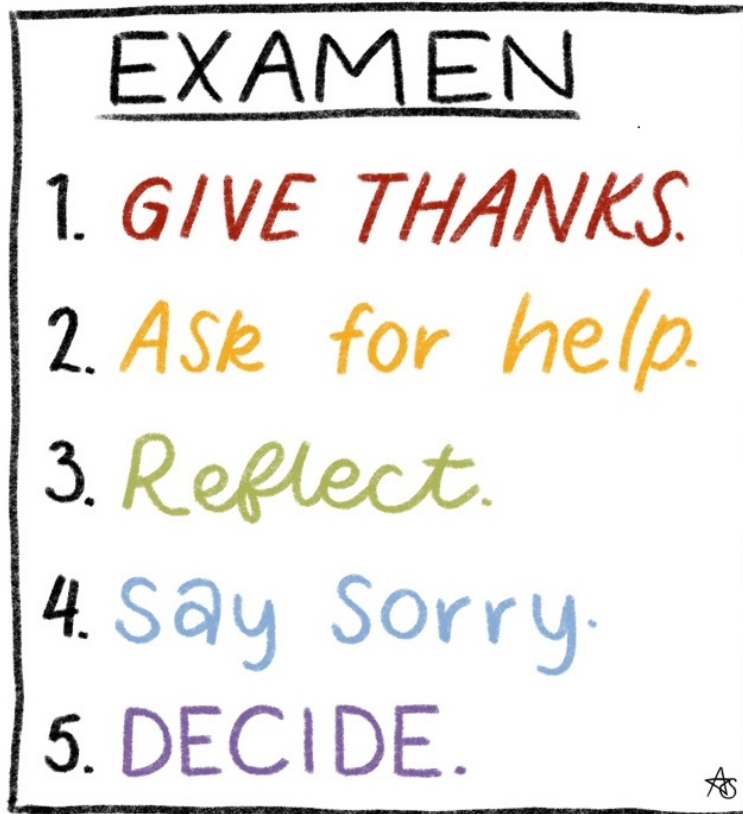
- How do we understand the needs of the planet Earth and its boundaries?
- How do new technologies help us to be better informed?
- Is our understanding of post-colonial history sufficiently understanding of the challenges of emerging nations?
- The interpretation of Scripture is ever new : are we equipping ourselves to see beyond the words and seeking understanding of the authors' intentions?
- The Church continues to be threatened by divisions and strife- how do we seek to 'think/feel with the Church'?
- Are we equipping ourselves to be financially responsible in a new age of inflation and market instability?



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 : St Mark 4. 21-25

And Jesus said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not on a stand?"²² For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light.²³ If any man has ears to hear, let him hear."²⁴ And he said to them, "Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you.²⁵ For to him who has will more be given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."



Points for Reflection:

- Our lives reflect our faith – do others see any radiance of joy, any ardour of spirit, any light to shine on darkness?
- Do we read deeply enough in the Gospel stories to hear the voice of Jesus?
- Do we realise how gifted we are? Are we able to give freely, sharing our skills, expertise, resources and time

Conversational prayer : Opening up to Jesus asking Him for insight into our reflections.....then we pray : ***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.***

After a moment of quiet we offer our day and our week:

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.

