

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

**SEVENTEENTH REFLECTION**  
**ALCALA AND THE SPANISH INQUISITION**



**Colegio Mayor de San Ildefonso** is a building located in Alcalá de Henares, Spain. It was built by Cardinal Cisneros who commissioned architect Pedro de Gumiel to design it. The foundation stone was laid in 1499, the Saint Ildefonsus` Chapel was completed in 1510; in 1516 construction began of the Paraninfo (Auditorium). In 1537 Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón designed the main façade, not there in Ignatius' time at Alcala.

Founded by Cardinal Francisco Jimenez Cisneros at the close of the fifteenth century The College was developed throughout the sixteenth century. By the time Ignatius and his companions arrived it had become a

centre of clerical education, particularly in the new humanism. It was at the cutting edge of theology.

Ignatius realised that if he were to embark on his life ambition to be an effective Soldier for Christ then he would need a better education. Supported by his benefactors in Barcelona, Ines Pascual and Isabella Roser, Ignatius took lessons in Latin grammar from Master Jeonimo Ardevol, at first privately, then in Ardevol's classes at the Estudio General. Back to school at the age of thirty-three the former Courtier and soldier, sat among the teenage boys.

After two years of study in Latin, after examination, Ignatius was now ready to embark on a University course at Alcala. Ignatius set out on the hot and dusty road, three hundred miles to Alcala, accompanied by three like-minded companions.

In February 1526 there was considerable unrest in Alcala. Ignatius arrived at a sensitive time, as the authorities were investigating various religious enthusiasts who were claiming special 'illumination'. The "Illuminists" had fallen foul of the Civil and Religious authorities, being an exclusive group who claimed superior knowledge, like the Gnostic heretics of an earlier age. They were examined by the Spanish Inquisition and some of their leaders were burnt as heretics. Clearly the teaching and activities of Ignatius, with his small group of male followers by this time wearing clerical style habits with grey hoods, were open to misinterpretation. Some followers of Ignatius were demonstrating ecstatic behaviour. This and other Religious enthusiasm attracted the attention of the Spanish Inquisition who began to take an interest in these students.

Ignatius had been studying philosophy, theology and dialectics, although he had not formally matriculated. In the Autobiography we read that as well as study ***"While in Alcala he engaged in giving the***

***Spiritual Exercises and in explaining Christian doctrine, and by these means he brought fruit for the glory of God. Many people came to a deep knowledge of and a relish for spiritual things...***

He had made friends with the de Eguia family, who assisted him greatly by drawing on their own resources to maintain the students themselves and also in their efforts to help the poor. Ignatius and three of his companions lived with this family. It was a period of confident evangelisation, but not without danger. Who were these 'sack-wearers' in their drab habits?

During this time the intense activity of Ignatius and his companions was the subject of much discussion and rumour. Who were these men and what were they doing? Being under suspicion of being 'reformers', Lutherans, Jewish converts, or members of the Illuminist sects Ignatius and his companions were eventually arrested.

Following imprisonment for forty-two days Ignatius was released having made a good impression on the President, Juan Rodriguez de Figuero, by his open demeanour and candour during the detailed questioning. His followers made similarly good impressions. Although not convicted of error or heresy restrictions were imposed on them : no longer to wear clergy habits, they were to dress as other students, they were no longer to be barefoot but to wear shoes, and for the next four years they were not to discuss, or teach matters of faith.

Ignatius was perplexed as how best to proceed and he sought the help of the Archbishop of Toledo, who had been impressed by his sincerity. Ignatius decided to go to the University at Salamanca. In the

Autobiography Ignatius tells us *“As he was leaving the Archbishop gave him four escudos”*.

So Ignatius, having visited the Archbishop, followed his four companions [ Calixto de Sa, Lope de Caceres, Juan de Arteaga, Jean Reynalde] on the seventy-mile journey to Salamanca.

### **Considerations for Reflection :**

- One notices again how fortunate Ignatius is in 'landing on his feet', in a strange city he found accommodation in the new Hospital of Our Lady of Mercy at Antezana. The Administrator had been impressed by Ignatius' humility in dealing with insulting remarks while he had been begging. His exemplary conduct is rewarded.
- Later the well-connected family of Miguel de Eguia, who had a family printing business, offered Ignatius and his companions accommodation. Interestingly Miguel's brother, Don Diego, was later to enter the Society of Jesus in Rome.
- We notice how the four 'companions' were loyal and supportive in Alcala, and went on ahead to Salamanca to prepare the way.
- Consistently gifts of friendship are kindled and nurtured by Ignatius' open and candid acceptance of people, and his loving conversations about spiritual things. Even when ill-equipped by lack of learning there is an integrity in his nature that admits humbly that he needs more education. Notwithstanding that he has an outward-looking faith that he seeks to share. This he does with

others so minded. Already we see *Companionship* as a key feature. Ignatius is man who forms and understands human relationships.

- Questions may arise in our minds about how we react to criticism; are we ever going to be noticed as followers of Jesus who seek to win others to a knowledge of God?
- Is our own formation in faith adequate for our time of life? Life-long learning is a key educational concept. We see Ignatius humbly yet assiduously equipping himself to be an articulate teacher for Jesus. To do so he gives himself unconditionally to God.
- How are we in 'relationship'? Meeting others with *cordial affection* creates deeper understanding, and as with St John Henry Newman we realise that "***Heart speaks to Heart***". This is a movement of longing and desire, in prayer and affection, between ourselves and God and in the *cordial affection* we share with others.

**The Suscipe Prayer : [Take, Lord].      *Ignatius Loyola***

***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.***

The handing over to God of every aspect of our mind and our activity, for him to use, is indeed radical prayer. We are getting to the root of what it is to love God unconditionally, we are sharing with God all that we are, and He shares with us what we need. God's grace, His sharing of gifts, operates with us in the mutuality of love. This Love of God-in-Christ is what urges us on, giving the increase in devotion and service.

### **We review our day and look forward with Jesus**



### **Scriptural Reflection : St Mark 13. 1-11**

*As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"*

*<sup>2</sup> “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.”*

*<sup>3</sup> As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately,<sup>4</sup> “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”*

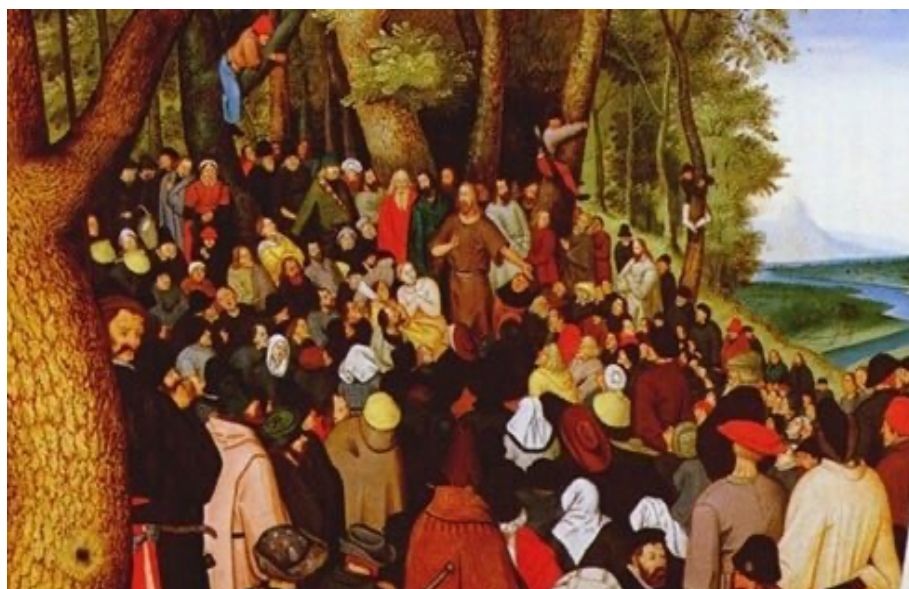
*<sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. <sup>7</sup> When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup> Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.*

*<sup>9</sup> “You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. <sup>10</sup> And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. <sup>11</sup> Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.*

**A Comment:** As Jesus contemplates the Temple, being aware of the violence and conflict in the country he reflects that there will be monumental destruction, religious agitation and prophecies of the end of the world. During these conflict-ridden years, whether decades, centuries or millennia there will be divisions in society in which there

will be persecution and imprisonments. These are familiar circumstances that we contemplate as the destructive power of violence and warfare is evident, as is climatic destruction in floods and fires, and diseases sweep across the globe.

The End-times are always in the here and now, calling us to penitence, renewal and positive action to right wrongs and to pursue the good. We are here that '***the gospel must first be preached to all nations.***' Yet in and through all of this the Holy Spirit will be active 'speaking in you'. We are empowered by the Spirit through Baptism, Confirmation and nurtured by the Spirit in every Sacrament.



**A Period of Silence** in which we pray with St Ignatius seeking understanding and insight, ever searching, ever finding, always willing.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

***Jesus Mercy, Mary Pray***



***Praise God Always***