

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

THIRTY-THIRD REFLECTION

ROME : THE GESÙ.



After his election in July 1538 the new Jesuit General, Fr Diego Laynez, was asked by the Holy Father whether he had any favours to request : there were two, and both were granted :

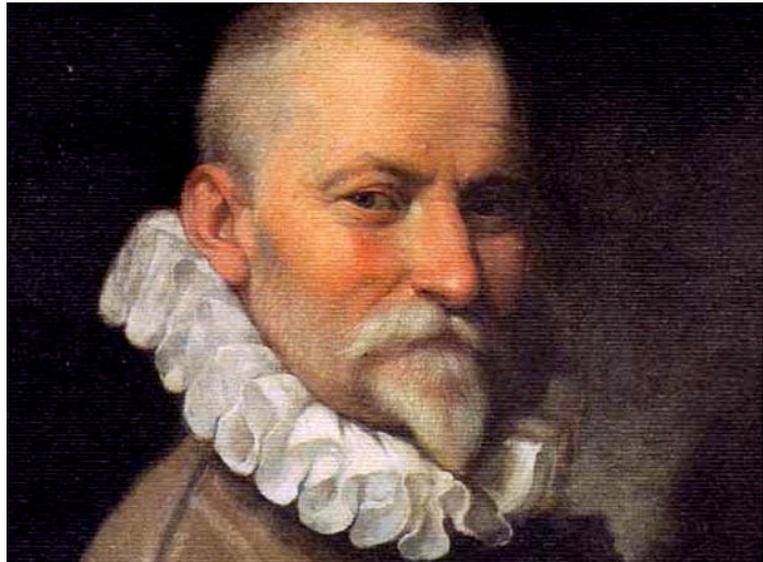
1. To build the Jesuit Church beside Santa Maria della Strada [the Gesù]
2. That no-one [not even Fr Nicholas Bobadilla] would be sustained by the Holy Father against the authority of the General. So the basis for obedience was established and confirmed; a way of proceeding for amity and concord within the brotherhood of the companions of Jesus.

The Building of the Gesù

The façade designed by Giacomo della Porta.



Ignatius in his lifetime had been planning for the first Jesuit Church to be built in Rome. He had appointed Michelangelo as the architect, but circumstances were not favourable so the project was put on hold. Michelangelo had died in 1564 so now that Fr Laynez had papal permission to proceed with the construction he had to find an architect.



The chosen architect was a former pupil and associate of Michelangelo, Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola [just called 'Vignola']. Work began almost immediately as construction began in 1568.

Associated with Vignola was another pupil and collaborator with Michelangelo, Giacomo della Porta [above right] who was also a Mannerist architect- the manner of style of High Renaissance buildings from the Florentine style that breaking away from Classical forms became prevalent in Northern Italy. Della Porta also favoured the Baroque style which became dominant from a period from the 1580 onwards. Vignola was the principal architect in interpreting the style of the Gesù as a significantly splendid space for preaching and the celebration of Mass. As Jesuits are not bound to the choral celebration of the Divine Office there is no choir. The massive Church is a welcoming space where the congregation gather to hear the Ministry of the Word [an emphasis of Ignatius] and to participate fully in the action of the Eucharist which is not behind a choir screen, but is open to everyone. In

addition the decoration of the Church was to elevate thoughts, minds and hearts: painted ceilings which seem to bring heaven to earth. Much of the ornate ceiling decoration was completed after the consecration and was the work of Baciccio [below].



Construction of the Gesù began in 1568 and the church was consecrated in 1584. Beside the buildings of the Jesuit headquarters and where Ignatius lived with his Companions this is the main and first Jesuit church in Rome. It is the "Mother Church" of the Society of Jesus. The Gesù has been a template, serving as an architectural pattern for many Jesuit churches that were to be built throughout Europe during the Counter Reformation and Baroque period.

The Tomb Altar of St Ignatius Loyola

The Church is officially named Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù: the Holy Name of Jesus



The major benefactor for the building of the Gesù was Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, nephew of Pope Paul III. His name is predominately displayed across the façade and in various locations inside the church. He had clear ideas about the decoration of the Gesù. He wanted an integrated composition of architecture, the paintings, and sculpture to be conceived as a unity.

Giovanni Battista Gaulli, otherwise known as Baciccio (1639-1709) was the artist responsible for the painting on the ceiling of the nave : "Adoration of the Triumph of the Holy Name of Jesus,". Baciccio was a protégé of Bernini, and was recommended by Bernini to paint the Gesù. He became famous for his use of perspective to create illusion. The majority of the decoration in the Gesù was done by Baciccio, including the nave ceiling, the dome, the half-dome, and the stucco figures. He began the nave fresco in 1676, almost a century after the church was completed, and finished three years later in 1679.





In the painting Baciccio represented Jesus in a barely visible monogram, IHS (the abbreviation of the Greek form of the name 'Jesus').

The letters [difficult to see in the photograph] are surrounded by surging light moves towards Heaven. See also the fate of sinners and heretics who are thrown back to Earth. This nave fresco celebrates the Name of the Society of Jesus – the focus of the Adoration of Jesus. The painting may be seen as a window to heaven. All of this extravagant and imaginative illustration is used for dramatic effect – members of the congregation are caught up in the feeling of participating in a spiritual realm.

The Baroque impulse in architecture and worship was to arrest the attention, challenge for faith, attract converts and enhance the faith of Catholics.

Thoughts to Consider:

- Churches needs to be built, maintained and enhanced, often with generous benefactors. Are we involved in the care of the material assets of our churches? Any expertise or resources that can be brought to use in maintaining and enhancing the fabric of our churches is sought and appreciated.
- Artists with a religious perspective and creative inspiration can assist in the formation and sharing of the Faith. Consider how some painting, icon, statue, stained-glass may help to deepen faith.

- Noble simplicity with clean walls, good light and a minimum of illustrative material can also be effective in creating a prayerful ambience. We may recall some such places and dwell on the insights that are produced.
- Catholic liturgical forms are often rich in symbolic forms and using all the senses : sight, hearing, touch, taste, fragrance. It is sometimes useful to identify and hold the particular sense- is there any message being conveyed?

Suscipe

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,

my memory, my understanding,

and my entire will,

All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

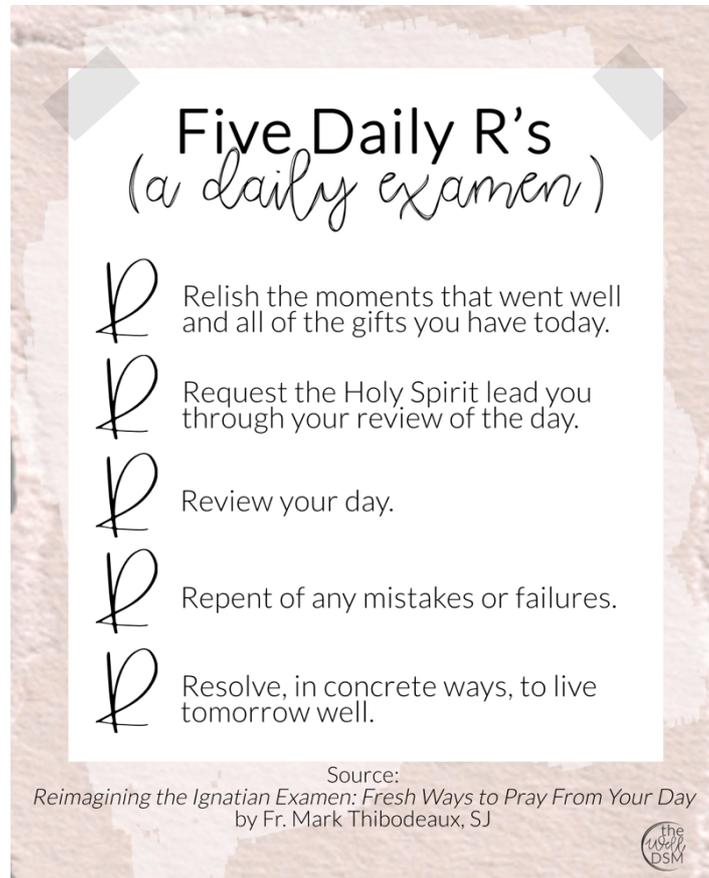
Give me only your love and your grace,

that is enough for me.

THE EXAMINATION OF OUR LIVES [THE EXAMEN]

Daily Examen :

Looking with quiet sincerity and simplicity of heart at the day



Preparation for Scriptural Reflection :

- *Short acts of devotion : placing ourselves in the presence of God.*
- *Opening up conversation with God by expressing our sorrow for sin and our gratitude for our blessings*
- *Asking God to receive our lives, our hopes and prayers*
- *Reading the Passage of Scripture slowly saying the words silently*
- *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.*

Introduction to the Scriptural Reflection : The writer from the Pauline school of theology develops an idea of St Paul about all members of the Church being built into a household/temple where God is present to us. We are built into a Tradition of Faith. Jesus is the chief cornerstone.

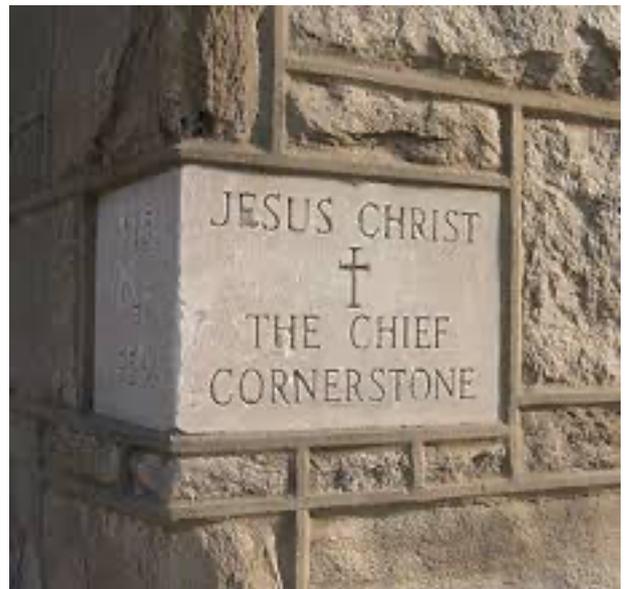
Passage for Spiritual Reflection:

Ephesians 2:19-22 ESV

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

A Period of Silence in which we pray with St Ignatius, talking conversationally to God as Father : seeking understanding and insight, ever searching, ever finding, always willing, and Loving.

*"For those who love, nothing is too difficult, especially when it is done for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ."
Ignatius Loyola*



The Lord's Prayer

Jesus Mercy, Mary Pray



Praise God Always