

July 31

Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) priest

In 1556 Ignatius of Loyola, a Catholic priest and founder of the Society of Jesus, died in Rome.

Born in 1491 into a noble Basque family, Iñigo Lopez de Loyola was educated for a military career and a life at court. Wounded in the leg at the age of thirty during an attack on the city of Pamplona, he was forced to undergo a long convalescence, during which he read several lives of Christ and Jacob of Varazze's Golden Legend. These works moved him strongly, and he decided to begin to seek out God's will for his life.

The fruit of these first experiences, and of the year of solitude and prayer Ignatius spent at Manresa, was his book of Spiritual Exercises, which made his own itinerary of discernment accessible to others.

Illumined by an intense inner life, he let his love for Christ lead him towards poverty and simplicity, and formed a small community of brothers devoted to announcing the Gospel and serving the spiritual needs of those around them. Always intent on keeping the divine in harmony with the human and on balancing the invocation of the Spirit in prayer with the concrete work of love, Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus in 1540 with his first companions. Its members, the Jesuits, were "poor pilgrim priests" willing to go anywhere in the world to tell all people of God's call to holiness. Over four centuries later, Ignatius' form of religious life is still one of the most fruitful and durable in the Western church.

PRAYER

God of heaven and earth,
you raised up Ignatius of Loyola for your glory alone,
and you sent him to preach your Gospel in poverty,
in an arduous mission among the nations:
grant that we may live in poverty and obedience,
giving witness to all people
that our only Lord is your Son Jesus Christ,
who is blessed now and forever.

BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Cor 10:31-11:1; Lk 14:25-33

Bartholomew de Las Casas (1474-1566) pastor

In 1566 Bartholomew de las Casas, the "defender of the Indians," died in Valladolid, Spain.

He was born in Seville in 1474. His father, who had sailed with Christopher Columbus and had started to cultivate a farm in Haiti, on a plot of land the Pope had assigned to the Spanish Crown as a base for Europe's evangelization of the New World, took Bartholomew there in 1502.

Bartholomew, who had spent time with the Dominicans of Salamanca, was familiar with the prophetic and wisdom literature of the Bible that condemns the injustice and oppression inflicted on the poor by the powerful. Shocked by the cruelty with which the natives were treated, he decided to free all of "his Indians" who had been forced into slavery with the pretext of evangelizing them. He began to announce the Gospel on his own terms, stressing poverty, peace and the freedom of the listener.

In 1522 Bartholomew joined the Dominican Order and took advantage of his years as a novice, which he spent in Haiti, to write theological and legal works in defense of his evangelical vision of the Indians. He was named bishop of Las Casas in 1543. Four years later he returned to Spain, where he continued to use the written and spoken word to fight oppression in the New World and all of the theories that attempted to make the Gospel compatible with the possibility of a "just war."

Before his death, Bartholomew saw at least a partial change in the Catholic Church's attitude towards slavery and the methods used in New World missions.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Isa 58:6-11; 1 Jn 3:14-18; Mt 25:31-46

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Ignatius of Loyola, priest (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (24 abib/hamle):

Abba Anub of Alexandria (3rd cent.), martyr (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Bartholomew de Las Casas, father of the Indios in South America

MARONITES:

Monks of St Maron Monastery (d. 517), martyrs

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Eudocimus the Righteous (9th cent.)

Forefeast of the precious and life-giving Cross

Cosmas the Hieromonk (18th cent.; Georgian Church)

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Slemun the Weeper (8th cent.), bishop

OLD CATHOLICS:

Germanus of Auxerre (d. 448), bishop