

# GUIDES

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EIDES

9

## Immersion in the Manresa of Ignatius

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Francesc Riera



# **IMMERSION IN THE MANRESA OF IGNATIUS**

## **SIX CONTEMPLATIONS**

Francesc Riera i Figueras

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**Note:** The photographs mentioned in the text are found in the photographic annex at the end of this booklet.

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# 1 THE CAVE OF SAINT IGNATIUS

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Ignatius must have spent many hours in the cave, reflecting, praying, and doing penance, especially during his third period in Manresa, the time of the great illuminations. He did not sleep in the cave, except in extraordinary circumstances. His manner was not that of a hermit, as he was sometimes portrayed by the earliest biographers. He spent much of his time among the poor people in the Santa Lucia Hospital.

## 1.1 First, the history

Before each contemplation of the Exercises Saint Ignatius proposes that we “should accurately narrate the history” [e.g., SpEx 2] so that our contemplation does not wander wildly when we are invited to recreate the gospel scene. Likewise, in this booklet we will preface each proposal for contemplating Saint Ignatius in Manresa with some historical notes which will allow the reader to place the contemplation in its proper context.

### *1.1.1 The time Ignatius spent in Manresa (1522-23)*

We will begin our contemplations with the Cave, the most significant space in the Manresa of Ignatius [Photo 1].

Ignatius found a place of refuge some 32 meters above the Cardener River, which flowed through “the Valley of Paradise.” From there he had a view of the beautifully cultivated “Gardens of Corcó” on the hill of Saint Bartholomew. It was a space that would allow him great solitude for prayer and penance [Photo 2].

The Cave was one of the many barely accessible grottos carved out by the river’s erosion during the Tertiary Age. Ignatius reached it by following a trail lined with brush, briars, and nettles; the trail would have passed along what is now

the right side of the Sanctuary and the ante-Cave. The Cave was like a balcony of rock above the river, with a splendid view of Montserrat; it was surrounded by thick weeds and bushes which enhanced the atmosphere of calm and solitude. To enter the cave, Ignatius would have had to stoop down since the space at that time was much smaller and the ceiling lower than now.

It is possible that Ignatius learned of the Cave from the prior of Saint Paul's, who was also the caretaker of the hospital for the needy where Ignatius lived. The priory had long had the custom of using the grottos on the Cardener as prayer spaces for the friars who were on retreat. Thus, the Cave itself might well have been used previously by those friars.

The lands themselves belonged to Bartomeu Roviralta, a merchant of Manresa. During the canonization process for Ignatius in 1606, Roviralta's nephew and heir, Maurici Cardona, testified that the Cave was "beneath a rock and situated on a piece of land in my possession; it was covered with weeds and thorns, and Montserrat could be seen from it through a hole." He also testified, as did other witnesses, that his uncle had often seen Ignatius at prayer in the Cave [Photo 3].

Soon after Ignatius left Manresa, his friends placed a small, rough cross at the highest point on the rock above the Cave. In 1602, in the Act of Donation of the Cave to Lucrecia de Gralla, the donor, Maurici Cardona, testified that "there was a wooden cross about the Cave of the Saint."

### *1.1.2 Appendix. The Cave becomes a "sanctuary"*

In 1598 the Capuchin friar Jeroni Forés, in a sermon in the church of La Seu, reprimanded the city for neglecting the Cave, whereupon the city councilors decided to reinforce the fence around it. In 1601 a lamp and an image of Ignatius were placed in the Cave, and a wooden cross was erected among the weeds outside it.

In 1603 Lucrecia de Gralla donated the land to the Society of Jesus, and that same year the bishop of Vic, Robuster i Sala, built a small chapel above the Cave. This edifice, which was expanded in the decades following, eventually became the first retreat house.

The side of the property bordering on the river was enclosed by a wall, which had a small window oriented toward Montserrat. The entrance was also changed, and in 1625 another entrance was added, the one preserved in the ante-Cave. The city, for its part, improved the access road.

In 1606 the judges of the canonization process testified that they had found one hundred thirty offerings to the saint inside the Cave. Also, on Sundays a lamp used to be lit. The space was so small that only ten visitors could fit it in at a time, but eventually it was enlarged to 6.50 by 1.75 meters, with a ceiling 2.10 meters high. In 1660 it was lengthened to 11.50 meters, and floor was lowered a little.

In 1666 the baroque façade on the exterior was finished, and soon after the interior was adorned with an altar and a tableau (1670). The interior design was

mainly the work of the sculptor Joan Grau, who was helped by his son Francesc and his disciple Josep Sunyer.

## 1.2 Let us enter the Cave ...

... with profound reverence, as thousands and thousands of pilgrims have done over the course of 500 years. Let us enter as the Pilgrim of Loyola did, coming in search of profound silence as the Spiritual Exercises were taking shape in his heart.

First we slowly walk across the ante-Cave, over the mosaics that reflect our essential desire: to live, like the sunflower, “turned toward the sun” (*vertitur ad solem*). Two magnificent angels of bronze (J. Llimona, 1910) welcome us as we enter into the *Coveta* (“little cave” in Catalan). The mosaic on the floor calls us to attention: “*locus in quo stas, terra sancta est*” (you are standing on holy ground!). We are invited to enter and to be filled with silence, peace, reverence, and prayer.

Like Ignatius, we come carrying our personal history –the good, the bad, and the ugly– and all the deepest desires of our hearts. Like the Pilgrim, we want to encounter Jesus the Lord. We sit, we kneel, we lie prostrate, we remain standing... Five hundred years ago, Íñigo of Loyola did the same.

We are in a grotto carved out in the Tertiary Period. Let us allow the long history and the telluric forces of the holy space ascend into our hearts from the depth of the earth so that they thrust us into the heart of God and the heart of the world. Let us allow all the prayer stored up over time in this stone chamber invade us and envelop us. The rocks bear testimony to the many hours that Ignatius prayed here and to the hallowed moments experienced by countless pilgrims who in the course of centuries have visited this sacred space.

Looking to the left, toward the river, Ignatius could see, through the weeds and the wild vegetation, the blue crest of the Montserrat peak. On that indomitable balcony, under the far-seeing gaze of the Black Virgin –before whom he had placed his sword and his handsome garments as a sign of his rejection of aggression and vainglory– he spent many hours in profound quiet, “silencing” many things so that he could “hear” the depths of his heart and find the heartbeat of God. And from God’s heart he would discover himself “sent” to the world.

Let us contemplate Ignatius. The alabaster altarpiece helps us to visualize the scene and gives us our composition of place [Photo 4]. The tableau was inspired by a painting that the Jesuit superior general M. Vitelleschi had placed in the *Coveta* in 1617. It shows Saint Ignatius kneeling under the rock of the grotto and writing the Exercises, but his head is turned almost completely around, in a position that seems forced, as he looks toward Mary and the mountain of Montserrat. At the same time, the everyday world is presented in a very realistic, concrete way: the bridge with a man crossing it, the Seu, farmers, details of local flora and fauna, olives, vines, snails, birds, lizards, ...

Being “turned toward the sun,” the Pilgrim delighted in his hours of prayer in that setting not far removed from everyday life. There in the Cave, in the silence of his heart, the major features of the Exercises gradually took shape, and these he will experience in the complexity of his day-to-day existence, as we will show in what follows.

The altarpiece is flanked by two angelic musicians, who subtly invite us to listen to the music that this place gives off.

Let us contemplate three more details of the Cave:

1) The enamel artwork of the *Tabernacle* (M. Noguera, 1995), depicting the manger of Bethlehem. Ignatius is depicted in the scene as one more worshiper –just as the Exercises propose when they ask the exercitant to be present in the gospel scene as an eyewitness of the events [SpEx 114].

2) The *two crosses engraved* on the rock, attributed to Saint Ignatius. One might think that the first is Christ’s and that the other belongs to Ignatius or to whoever is praying in the Cave.

3) The *mosaics on the floor* depicting vegetable items. We should notice the font of living water that gratifies the thirsty deer (Psalm 42) and symbolizes the desire of Ignatius and those who pray in the Cave. We should also observe the deceitful serpent hiding in the underbrush [SpEx 334], whom Ignatius had to unmask.

Everything moves us to maintain a moment of silence. May the silence of the Cave engulf us.

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## INVITATION TO PRAYER

### **Do you feel encouraged to enter into your interior cave?**

Whether you do or not, you should enter slowly and peacefully. No need to hurry. Our heart and God’s heart have their own times. Relax and let yourself be engulfed by the silence.

a) Allow the great question to surface from the depth of your heart: what is the meaning of my life? Where are its roots?

- Don’t be content with a superficial answer. Keep going deeper into your interior cave, like a good spelunker.
- Behind all you do and all you experience, who are you really? What is it that you want? What is your deepest desire in the midst of the tumult of family, of work, of everyday existence –and perhaps also of the voluntary service you do?



b) Perhaps you hear, in this first descent into your interior cave, a response that seems diffuse and elusive. Don't worry, it will become more focused!

- As you descend into your depths, you will meet up with yourself, and you will also discover the face of God.
- Feel free to ask yourself, as the Pilgrim did, what is my dream for my life?
- And even more: what are God's dreams for me?

c) Finish with a profound act of reverence to God, as Ignatius did so many times in this same place. Make an interior (and perhaps even exterior!) reverence. Maybe you feel like praying an Our Father, meditating on each word, as Ignatius taught us to do. Or pray a Hail Mary to the Virgin of Montserrat whom Ignatius could glimpse through the bushes that covered the grotto. Or recite Psalm 42, represented artistically in the mosaic on the floor of the Cave: "As a deer longs for flowing streams."

- Or it might even be enough to read the *Utopia* of Ignatius of Loyola, the *Principle and Foundation* [SpEx 23], found at the start of his Spiritual Exercises. You might feel yourself far from what your lips are enunciating, but enjoy this sense of "utopian freedom."

## 2 IGNATIUS WOUNDED AT PAMPLONA

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“Until the age of twenty-six, he was a man given to worldly vanities, delighting especially in the exercise of arms and possessing a great and vain desire to gain honor.” [*Autobiography* 1]

### 2.1 Let us review briefly the history of Íñigo before he was wounded at Pamplona

#### 2.1.1 *From Basque Country to the Kingdom of Castile: Arévalo*

When he was fifteen years old (around the year 1506), the family of Íñigo was able to send him to live and be trained under the aegis of Velázquez de Cuéllar, the treasurer of the king and queen of Spain. Íñigo thus live for a time at the high official's family palace in Arévalo as well as in the other Castilian courts where de Cuéllar and his family would reside for extended periods.

Accustomed as Íñigo was to the small valleys of the Basque Country, he must have been impressed by the immensity of the Castilian countryside. The tower-house of Loyola must have seemed to him insignificant compared to the palaces where he now stayed. Besides his time with the de Cuellar family, Íñigo also lived for periods at the court of Isabel and Ferdinand, which was also the residence of Juana La Loca (“Joanna the Mad”) and Germana de Foix (Ferdinand's second wife). Íñigo was being trained to hold the important posts that nobles then exercised both in the world of politics and in the world of war (the two being intimately connected).

As an adolescent and young man, Íñigo developed, almost by instinct, close relations with people of distinguished lineage. As he and the treasurer's sons matured, they began taking on ever greater responsibilities.

Íñigo learned the various disciplines that prepared young men to exercise high positions in government. He became skilled in matters of laws, diplomacy, economy, arms, music, and the like.

It is easy to imagine how he developed during the ten years he spent at Arévalo and how that ambience shaped his character and personality. Íñigo was alert, industrious, and magnanimous; many began to place great hope in him. He dreamed of winning fame and honor and of holding the highest possible posts in the kingdom. At the same time he was a young man ready to venture beyond the usual moral and civic parameters. Let us recount one story to illustrate this.

In 1515, during the Carnival celebration in Azpeitia, Íñigo and his brother, a priest, must have behaved scandalously because Íñigo ended up being accused of “enormous crimes.” Pursued by the authorities of Guipúzcoa, he fled from Loyola and took refuge in Pamplona. From there the young Íñigo returned to Arévalo, where he could boast of his misdeeds to his companions at the court. Polanco, a great friend and close collaborator of the saint, said that in those early days Íñigo was “disorderly in gambling, in duels, and in dealing with women.”

In those years at Arévalo, Íñigo was preparing himself to assume great responsibilities. One can imagine how with what dedication, earnestness, and magnanimity he undertook his formation. There he learned to live among the mighty of this world. We might describe him as the typical striver of the 16th century: trained in the best schools and universities, hobnobbing with the leading families, and anxious to reach the top of the social ladder.

### *2.1.2 The wound at Pamplona*

When Íñigo’s protector, Velázquez de Cuéllar, fell out of grace and died in 1516, the aspiring young man’s place in the household of the treasurer was uncertain. Meanwhile, he sought new contacts that might help reach ever greater goals. The widow of Velázquez even helped him find a powerful new patron, the viceroy of Navarra, which was a kingdom recently conquered and annexed to Castile, contrary to the wishes of most of the kingdom’s citizens.

In 1517 Íñigo moved to the court of the duke of Nájera, Antonio Manrique de Lara, the first viceroy of the annexed Navarra. Since many of the kingdom’s inhabitants considered the duke an illegitimate interloper, he gave the young Loyola the difficult diplomatic task of making the annexation palatable. With his training in politics and public administration at Arévalo, Íñigo set to work and was able to resolve matters of great complexity. In his new position he showed himself to be a skilled diplomat; he made attempts to forge accords that would consolidate the conquests, but his efforts were fruitless.

Enrique Albret, son of the deposed king of Navarra, laid claim to the crown and received the support of Francis I of France. On May 18, 1521, when the French king arrived with strong forces drawn from France and Navarra, the Cas-

tilian military leaders thought it would be best to yield to them, but Íñigo refused to surrender and took command of the citadel of Pamplona. The resistance was fierce until a cannonball fractured the leg of Íñigo and made it impossible for him to keep fighting. But was that cannonball friendly fire or enemy fire? Soon we will see. That was on 20 May 1521 [Photo 5].

The victorious French, impressed by the wounded soldier's courage and dignity, treated him graciously. He was provided medical care until it was possible to him to be transported to Loyola.

Let us end this epigraph by noting that during this time Íñigo surely accompanied the duke of Nájera to Valladolid when the duke swore allegiance to Carlos I, as well as to Barcelona when the duke received the order of the Golden Fleece in the cathedral. Íñigo was totally immersed in the highest political circles.

Diverse sources have led some historians to think that during this period Íñigo had an illegitimate daughter.

## **2.2 Ignatius withdraws into himself, putting his “professional career” in crisis**

A cannonball!

Standing before the sculpture of the wounded Íñigo in Pamplona,<sup>1</sup> we should study carefully his face in order to feel the frustration in his heart. Let us examine in detail his improvised bandages and try to imagine his thoughts –if in fact his wounds left him any space for thinking. The physical pain was intense. The strong, valiant warrior is now fallen, defeated. Stretched on the ground, he drinks from the bitter cup of physical pain and professional failure. The French cannonball had simultaneously shattered his leg, his honor, and his prominence, threatening to doom his brilliant future.

Let us contemplate the stretcher on which he had to travel many miles over rough roads. We can try to enter into the soul of that wounded man who was just beginning to become a “Pilgrim.” The French treated him with magnanimity as they returned him to his home in the depths of Basque Country.

Loyola (June 1521 to February 1522). The medical cures applied to his leg in Pamplona did not restore it to health. He had to undergo the butchery of breaking the badly healed bones and then rejoining them. His bodily condition grew worse so that by June 24th he seemed to be dying. That same night, however, there was a glimpse of improvement. His health steadily improved, but when he found that a bone was left sticking out of his foot and so prevented him from walking with the

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1. The well-known bronze statue by the sculptor Flotats (native of Barcelona and Manresa) is located at the entrance of the Casa de Loyola. The plaster mold used to cast the statue is found in the retreat house in Manresa. We can contemplate the scene with the help of this sculptured work [Photo 5].

dignity he desired, he demanded another operation. To the horror of his relatives and the doctors, he ordered the surgeon to saw off the protruding bone. It was an operation done not out of need but out of vanity. Íñigo was ready to undergo torture in order not to spoil his image. Without complaint he submitted to the agonizing procedure, carried out while he was awake, without the benefit of any anesthesia.

Íñigo then began a long process of recovery. To distract himself and pass the time, he asked for books of knightly adventure, but there were none available in the house. Disappointed, he had to content himself with a life of Christ and a book of stories about the saints. These texts, little by little, began having a tremendous effect on him. During the long, empty days, Íñigo spent many hours making plans for a illustrious future in accord with his old ambitions: he would marry a distinguished lady, he would accomplish glorious feats ... At other moments, though, he felt inwardly “moved” by what he had read in the books about Christ and the saints. Their lives confronted him with the great question about the meaning of his own life.

Íñigo was also increasingly surprised to notice that spiritual reading produced in him an elevated interior state that lasted hours and hours. In contrast, when he thought about a future filled with vain honors, his interior delight lasted not nearly as long as that produced by reading the lives of the Christ and the saints. At this point Íñigo was on the verge of one of his major findings: the discernment of spirits, which is a central theme of the Spiritual Exercises and the Society of Jesus.

To what is my life devoted? Will my “curriculum” make me profoundly myself and profoundly happy? Will it bring me closer to God? And how am I going to abandon this life that I have absorbed since I was little, this life in which I’ve had so much success and gained so much renown?

When someone has descended into the depths of his own life, he begins to ask –and answer– the big questions: what meaning is there in a life that revolves around “climbing the ladder” of worldly prestige in search of positions of power? This is the moment of “conversion,” and it found perfect expression in the room of the tower-house in Loyola where Íñigo spent so many hours reading and reflecting. That room that has since been transformed into a “conversion chapel.”

Íñigo had by now matured his thoughts and made a decision: he would make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and spend the rest of his life in the country of Jesus, his newly discovered Lord, the man who had moved him so deeply while he was reading the *Life of Christ*. And there in Palestine he would emulate the life of the saints about whom he had read in the *Flos Sanctorum*.

But first he had to go to Barcelona and from there sail to Rome in order to get permission to make the pilgrimage. On his way to Barcelona he wanted to stop at the Sanctuary of Montserrat.

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## INVITATION TO PRAYER

### Enemy fire or friendly fire?

Spend a good while at the bedside of the wounded, defeated Íñigo. Imagine the external scene and the interior experience.

a) Put yourself also before Jesus, the Lord, asking about the meaning of the wounds you have suffered in life, the blows you have felt.

- It is possible that in your life you have experienced falls and missteps... Maybe someone has even tripped you up. Such blows may have left you broken in many places.
- It would be helpful to identify some of those blows, jotting them down in a little list.
- Perhaps it has not been easy for you to deal with them.

b) After that, like Íñigo in the midst of that long silence in the house at Loyola, as he was recovering from his wounds, ask yourself with all honesty:

- Have my wounds resulted from friendly fire or enemy fire? Have they helped awaken me from inertia, fantasy, superficiality?
- Maybe the cannonballs allow us, like Íñigo, to reach into corners of our heart that were never before touched or attended to. Do you have some experience of that? It is time to remember Saint Teresa's dictum: "God writes straight with crooked lines."

c) Finally, pray while imagining the Holy House of Loyola. The wounded soldier is wrestling with the great questions of existence:

- To what is my life devoted? Will my "curriculum" make me profoundly myself? Will it make me belong to God? What meaning is there in a life that revolves around "climbing the ladder" of worldly prestige in search of positions of power?
- You can end by asking the Spirit who illuminated Íñigo to shed bright light also on your life.

## 3 MONTSERRAT: THREE FOUNDATIONAL ACTIONS

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In the sixteenth century Montserrat was an important sanctuary, well-known in the courtly circles where Ignatius was trained. Donations for Montserrat were collected in Guipúzcoa itself; the father-in-law of the Duke of Nájera (of the lineage of the Cardonas) had sung in the Boys Choir of Montserrat. In those days Spaniards considered Montserrat the “star of the East,” as it is called in the hymn “El Virolai.”

### 3.1 History: the final stretch of the Ignatian Way

Riding on a mule, the nobleman left Loyola elegantly dressed in costly attire. He was accompanied by two servants and his brother, the priest Pedro, who had been his partner in the disorderly conduct of 1515. They stopped at the Sanctuary of Aránzazu, and after a prayer vigil descended to Oñate, where Pedro remained, staying in the house of one of his sisters. Passing through Navarrete, Íñigo collected some back pay from the Duke of Nájera, part of which he gave to several persons to whom he felt indebted and the rest of which he donated for the restoration of an image of the Virgin. At this point he took leave of the two servants, finally attaining the solitude he so desired.

His journey took Íñigo through Logroño, Tudela, Alagón, Zaragoza, Fraga, Lleida, Cervera, and Igualada (where he probably bought some sandals and rough robe), arriving at length at a second Marian sanctuary: Montserrat.

### 3.2 Toward the inner depths of Ignatius

#### *3.2.1 At the emblematic monastery of Montserrat he undergoes three acts of initiation*

We can easily imagine the fascinated Pilgrim climbing up the steep face of Montserrat, which in early spring was covered with rosemary and other aromatic

blooms. Nature was transformed into the throne of the woman who was now his true Queen. Amid the luxuriant beauty of the mountain on which the monastery sat, the Pilgrim underwent his initiation.

a) First of all, he reconciled his life. How many of us would love to reconcile our lives! His was a life that ranged from the “enormous crimes” for which he had been arraigned in Azpeitia, through the frivolities he related in his later years (“until the age of 26 he lived only for worldly vanities” [*Autobiography* 1], all the way to the maneuvers and schemes he plotted, motivated only by the desire to gain prestige and power.

Íñigo spent three intense days reviewing all the dark corners of his history in order to place them, with unbounded sadness, in the merciful hands of God and to receive sacramental reconciliation from the hands of Juan Chanon, the monk confessor who ministered to him. Íñigo was thus able to free himself from the gloomy bog of his life and grieve in peace over all the times he had selfishly offended others, sometimes quite cruelly. A person who experiences such an inner liberation is born again.

b) Stripped naked of his ragged interior vestments, he felt for the first time uncomfortable with his rich exterior vestments, for these vainly pretended to reveal an interior nobility he did not possess. Discreetly and without fuss, he approached a beggar on the street, took off those ostentatious garments of nobility, and placed them on this man who was one of the least and the last, one of the rejected and discarded people of the world.

With an unspeakable inner serenity, he clothed himself in the “kind of itchy cloth they use to make sacks ... which reached to his feet” [*Autobiography* 16]. He has put on the vestment of poverty, which places him among those who count for nothing in the world.

c) Now reconciled with himself, with his fellow human beings, and with God, Íñigo no longer had to defend himself from anything. He therefore had no need of his mighty sword. He was now a poor beggar, a reconciled man without enemies and without any desire to conquer anything.

Once in possession of this surprising interior freedom, the gentleman of Loyola decided to “unknight” himself in an act with countercultural connotations. On the eve of the feast of the Annunciation, following the traditional models for being made a knight (laid down by Alfonso X in *Las Siete Partidas* and documented in the books of knightly tales), Íñigo spent the whole night in prayer, kneeling before the altar of Our Lady [Photo 6]. He took off his sword—a sign of aggressive power—and laid it at the feet of the Black Virgin. Standing before Holy Mary, he had changed his lord and master, and he had also changed his paradigms, his interests, his future. It was the night of March 24-25 of 1521.

### 3.2.2 *Descending the mountain toward Manresa*

Freed of the shadows of his turbulent interior world, relieved of the desire for “prestige,” and dispossessed of the “power” symbolized by the sword, the Pilgrim



now felt profoundly enlivened. He was a new man. His state of soul is well reflected in the words which the hymn “El Virolai” addresses to Our Lady: “Our history begins with your name.”

At dawn on the feast of the Annunciation (March 25), after attending the first Mass at the Montserrat Sanctuary, Íñigo walked down the rough paths of the mountain, filled with a glee that he had never experienced before. He was “alone and on foot,” he had “little baggage,” and he felt light as the air. He still limped and felt some pain in the wounded leg, but his spirit overflowed with the beautiful strange freedom he had so recently received. When reaching the Chapel of the Apostles at the entrance of Manresa (the present-day Plaza dels Apòstols, where the buses park, Íñigo came upon some women and asked them if they knew of any hospital for the needy where he might find lodging for few days. He wanted some peace and quiet to savor the experiences he had had in Montserrat and to make some notes in the little book of “blank pages” that he had had bound in Loyola and that he guarded discreetly.

While the Pilgrim was descending the mountain, his placid pace was interrupted by a gendarme who asked him bluntly: “Did you give some costly and refined clothes to a beggar a few hours ago? He claims he received them from a young noble.” Íñigo could not help but break into tears before the officer of the law, thinking of the poor man for whom he had unwittingly caused problems by giving him aristocratic raiment in order to clothe himself in poverty.

Just ten months earlier the Pilgrim had been himself one of the authorities. Now we are surprised to see the fiery fighter of Pamplona with tears in his eyes. His convalescence in the tower-house of Loyola, his long silent journey to Montserrat, and those foundational experiences on the mountain had opened up cracks in the interior and exterior shells of his personality.

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## INVITATION TO PRAYER

### **“Great spirit and generosity” [SpEx 5] while I contemplate the mountain of Montserrat**

I behold Íñigo coming down the mountain and feeling an interior freedom that he has never experienced before. He is filled “with great spirit and generosity.” The Pilgrim provokes in us to feelings of healthy envy!

a) I imagine him walking down the roads as he recalls what he had experienced in Montserrat: reconciliation, the gift of his clothing to a poor man, the vigil to become “unknighted.” Now, delighting in the freedom of God, he descends the

mountain with one question that he keeps repeating: “Lord, what do you want of me?”

- Overflowing from within, he wants to return to God all that he has and keep nothing for himself. Desiring poverty of heart, he wants to empty his heart of the thousand baubles that have accompanied him all his life.
- I also, like the Pilgrim at Montserrat, keep asking: “Lord, what do you want of me?”
- And like him, I desire reconciliation, humility, and freedom from hostility. I desire the freedom of one who has his eyes fixed only on God. I ask this earnestly of the Black Virgin.

b) I imagine Íñigo entering the town of Manresa “with great spirit and generosity.” The eleven months he is to spend there will be his Spiritual Exercises.

- With these contemplations I am tasting some of what Ignatius experienced, and I feel moved to ask that I become a truly magnanimous person the rest of my life.
- I may be helped by relishing these words of Ignatius: “The persons who make the Exercises will benefit greatly by entering into them with great spirit and generosity toward their Creator and Lord, and by offering all their desires and freedom to him so that His Divine Majesty can make use of their persons and of all they possess in whatever way is in accord with his most holy will” [SpEx 5].

c) To end this section, I will behold once again the mountains of Montserrat. Truly, Ignatius and Ignatian spirituality can sing with “El Virolai”: “And Montserrat is our Sinai.”

- Perhaps by interiorly singing some stanzas of this hymn to the Virgin of Montserrat I will find a good way to gather my prayer together.<sup>2</sup>

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2. “Rose of April, Black Virgin of the mountain, / star of Montserrat, / light up the Catalan land, / and guide us to Heaven .... Our history begins with your name / and Montserrat is our Sinai. / May these rocks covered with rosemary / be for everyone stair steps to glory.”

## 4. FIRST PERIOD: MANRESA

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*Happily freed of his past life, Íñigo proposes, “with great spirit and generosity,” to “conquer” holiness.*

“When my mother was coming from Montserrat with two of her godchildren and three other women, they met up with a young man dressed as a pilgrim. Of medium height, he had a light complexion, blond hair, and a serious bearing; he had a limp in his right leg. The man inquired whether there was a hospital nearby where he might find lodging for a few days. My mother told him that the nearest one was three leagues distant, the hospital for the needy in Manresa. She said that if he wanted, she would take care of him the best she could. ... In order not to give rise to scandal, my mother thought that it would be best for the Pilgrim to move on rather than stay with her, since she was a widow and he was a young man and handsome, especially since there was a pilgrimage that day in the chapel of Our Lady of the Guide and many people had gathered there.”

(Fragments of the declarations of Joan Pascual)

### 4.1 History: the arrival at Manresa

#### 4.1.1 *The “Valley of Paradise,” the first panoramic vision of Manresa*

Once the Pilgrim crossed the stream of Rajadell and came within sight of Manresa, he had before him a magnificent panorama: the “Valley of Paradise.” Such was the name given to the banks of the Cardener River, which were covered with extensive gardens and orchards and were surrounded by cliffs and hills of varying heights, containing terraces and caves.

The sight of the buildings of Manresa must have especially impressed Íñigo: the Old Bridge, built in the 10th century, rebuilt in the 12th; the priory of Saint Paul, founded by the hermits of Montserrat in 1412 and now ruled by Poblet; the chapel of Saint Bartholomew, dating from the 13th century, a place where Ignatius often

found refuge for prayer; the Cave itself; the Basilica of La Seu (1328), work of Berenguer de Montagut, who also designed the Santa María del Mar in Barcelona; the church of Saint Michael, which is mentioned in documents of the 11th century; the large churches of Carmen and Saint Dominic, dating from the early 14th century; the Hospital of Saint Andreu (for foreigners) with a primitive church built in 1309; the Hospital of Saint Lucia, with its Gothic chapel, mentioned in a document of 1321; the twenty-four-kilometer canal, a bold engineering work that supplied the city with water from the town of Balsareny on the Llobregat River.

Despite all these venerable monuments, the city that Ignatius entered was impoverished. Because of warfare, disease, and famine, suffered during previous decades, the population had been reduced to about 4000 inhabitants, hardly a fourth of what it had been before.

#### *4.1.2 Why Ignatius stayed in Manresa*

Ignatius harbored a great desire to go to the Holy Land and to live the rest of his days there, in the land of Jesus. But first he needed a few days to process the experiences of Montserrat and to note them down in the book we already mentioned. After doing that, he would proceed to Barcelona and seek passage to Rome, where he would request permission for the pilgrimage. In the short period he had before embarking, an important event affected his travel plans.

Adrian of Utrecht had been elected pope, and he also was on his way to Rome. His party could possibly have reached Barcelona in the first days of April, but preceding him came a flow of illustrious dignitaries who wanted to render homage to the new pope. The last thing that Ignatius wanted at that time was to meet up with functionaries and nobles of the court of Castile, many of whom he knew well.

For some reason, then, he delayed his departure from Manresa: he may have wanted to deepen the spiritual experience of Montserrat, or he may have been reluctant to go to Barcelona for fear of meeting his former colleagues or catching the plague. In any case, the few days that the Pilgrim had originally planned to spend in Manresa turned into eleven months.

## **4.2 The geography of Ignatius's first days in Manresa: a contemplative visit**

This section seeks to be a sort of “composition of place” [SpEx 47] that brings color and life to our contemplation of the eleven months that Ignatius spent in Manresa [Photo 7]. We will walk along with him on the route he probably took on his first day in the city, and we will try to savor in our imagination these holy Ignatian sites “just as if I were there” in the scene, in accord with the pedagogy of the contemplations in the Exercises [SpEx 114].

#### 4.2.1 Walking along the probable route of Ignatius's first day

a) *La Guía* ["The Guide," Photo 8]. We begin by sitting by the Cardener River, perhaps the first thing Ignatius beholds when he arrives in Manresa on 25 March 1522. The time is noon, and the Pilgrim is walking along the riverbank. He left Montserrat at dawn, feeling freer than he had ever felt before. It is the feast of the Annunciation, a day when pilgrims come to the chapel, which at that time was situated near where the highway and the train line pass now. (The present-day chapel is larger and a little higher up, in the neighborhood of La Guía.)

The Pilgrim stops for a long while at the chapel, standing before the cross, one more among the many worshippers. Those who testified at the beatification process stated that Ignatius experienced here a moment of great interior intensity. We may imagine him praying to Holy Mary of La Guía, asking her to "guide" him in this new stage of life he is beginning.

Those who accompany Ignatius on his journey desire to be guided on their own interior paths in the same way the Pilgrim from Loyola was.

b) *The Vell Bridge* [Photo 9]. After recovering energy and being fortified interiorly in La Guía, Ignatius crosses the century-old bridge and enters a city which will become what he calls his "primitive church." The Pilgrim of the 16th century, like the pilgrim of the 21st century, crosses the bridge slowly, deliberately, relishing an infinity of inner experiences and desiring to find a path that will introduce him into the depths and heights of God's truth and light.

c) *Chapel of Saint Mark*. Built in the 15th century, it belongs to the guild of the tanners. As he will do so often before the crosses and the chapels he comes across, Ignatius stops here to pray and contemplate.

d) *The bag man*. On his way to the Santa Lucia Hospital for the Needy, he must pass along Montserrat Street (what is now Saint Ignatius Way was then a gully, the *Torrent Mirable*). As he walks down the narrow streets of the city, the children taunt him and call him the "bag man." We can easily imagine this former luminary of the Castilian court, now reduced to one of the poor who depend on the alms given them just to eat.

This man, who has spent his whole life seeking the highest places of honor and power in the government of the Kingdom of Castile, has passed through a barrier; he has crossed many bridges in order to number himself among the least and the last of the earth.

e) *The Saint Lucia Hospital for the Needy*. During the eleven months he spends in Manresa, Ignatius lives here most of the time, eating with the poor, caring for the sick, praying in the chapel attached to the hospital. During his final months in Manresa he is already offering, there on the steps at the entrance to the chapel, the Spiritual Exercises in a preliminary form.

It is easy to imagine this small hospital as it was in 1522 [Photo 10]. It served the needy, the sick, and travelers. These are the people with whom Ignatius regularly lives

and eats, sharing with them the alms he collects, caring for the sick and bathing them. If we enter the hospital and its chapel [Photo 11 and 12], we can see this nobleman who has become a beggar, a friend of the poor, and a servant of the infirm. Whether praying in ecstasy in the chapel or accompanying the poor of the earth in the hospital, the Pilgrim has a lively experience of encountering the Mystery of God.

We can sit for a while and let what we have experienced in this visit flow through our minds and our hearts.

f) *The Basilica of La Seu*. After finding lodging at the hospital, the Pilgrim probably passes the Santa Lucia Gate in the city wall and proceeds up Santa Lucia Street to the Basilica of La Seu. Witnesses at the beatification processes stated that on his very first day Ignatius prayed there for a long while. This majestic cathedral and the church of the Dominicans are the two main places where he attends Mass and the liturgical hours, and also where he goes to confession and seeks counsel [Photos 13 and 14].

The 21<sup>st</sup> century pilgrim, fascinated by the Gothic splendor, stops and imagines the inner sentiments of Ignatius on that first day he spends in Manresa.

g) *The first days*. Ignatius is seeking solitude, which he does not always find in the hospital. Soon we see him by the entrance of the house of the Canyelles family (30 Sobrerroca Street); he sits beneath the staircase, like a homeless person, but he is welcomed there by the family. He finds that this spot inspires him to reflect and to write about the experience he had in Montserrat.

#### 4.2.2 *A countercultural way of life*

Sitting at peace in any of these places, let us continue our contemplative visit by imagining now the way of life of this Pilgrim, this “bag man.”

During his days of convalescence in Loyola, Ignatius promised to emulate the great saints and ascetics of history: “If Saint Francis or Saint Dominic ... did it, then I can do it also” [*Autobiography* 7]. His first steps in Manresa take him along the path of this naïve emulation of the saints.

A few months ago he was seeking honors and achievement, and he had a surprising obsession with his personal image (remember the second operation at Loyola, when he had a bone on his foot amputated so that his boot would fit well). Now he is acting totally differently: he cares nothing about his appearance; he lets his hair and his fingernails grow long, whereas before he treated them with great care. His clothes are disheveled, and his personal hygiene leaves much to be desired. He arouses “disgust” in ways that he never would have expected to do a few months before. He has crossed “red lines” to show that he has changed sides; he has placed himself on the other side of history, with the least and the last and with Jesus.

He spends seven hours a day in prayer, besides going to Mass and Vespers at La Seu or at the Dominican church. As he himself explains: “At Manresa he lived

on the alms that he daily begged. He never ate meat nor partook of wine, though they were offered him. On Sundays, however, he never fasted, and if wine were offered him, he drank of it sparingly. In former days he had been very careful of his hair, which he had worn, and, indeed, not unbecomingly, in the fashionable manner of the young men of his age; but now he determined to cease to care for it, neither to comb it nor to cut it, and to dispense with all covering for his head both day and night. To punish himself for the too great nicety which he had formerly had in the care of his hands and feet, he now resolved to neglect them” [Autobiography 19].

Most definitely, Ignatius is embracing an image that is totally contrary to all that has been his cultural world until this moment.

He lives happily in God’s presence, feeling fulfilled in his interior silence. His spiritual state is one of tranquility and joy, and he feels great consolation with this new ways of doing and being. He himself later said of those days: “Up to this period he had remained in a constant state of tranquility and consolation.” But he immediately added that “he had no interior knowledge of the spiritual life” [Autobiography 20].

#### *4.2.3 Probable chronology of the first stage at Manresa (from 25 March to mid-July 1522)*

Ignatius arrived in Manresa on March 25 and found lodging at the hospital for the needy. Five days later, desiring more solitude, he was allowed to stay at the Dominican priory (now the Saint Dominic Plaza), but when he needed even greater solitude, the Canyelles family gave him the space under the stairway of their house. He returned to the hospital around April 20, by which time he had certainly finished recording his experiences at Montserrat. This task was the main reason he had made a temporary detour to Manresa, but contrary to his previous plans, he did not then leave for Barcelona.

### **4.3 The interior depths of Ignatius**

Ignatius arrived at Manresa with a profound desire to “conquer” sanctity and worthiness and to serve his new Lord, the Eternal King, with more dedication than he had ever served any temporal king. His whole life he had been a “conqueror” of high status, and even during his long convalescence at Loyola he had enjoyed thinking about everything he would do in order to “ascend” further by serving great lords and by marrying a princess of distinguished lineage.

He came to Manresa “ignorant about the things of God” [Autobiography 20] and lacking any ability to discern, but he had a strong desire to do great things for his Lord. He was still basically narcissistic, dreaming of feats he would heroically

perform. He needed to be able to look at himself in a mirror and see himself as honorable, but now the honorability was very different from that he had known in the court of Castile. The main attraction continued to be his “honorable” image, which he thought he could achieve by means of his own strength and ability.

His first four months in Manresa were filled with great fervor, magnanimity, and spiritual serenity and stability. But soon he became aware that holiness was not something to be conquered. What he found himself conquering instead was a spiraling descent into the dark inner wells that he thought reconciled in Montserrat. In a way, he was still the Pharisee of the parable; what he needed was to see himself more as the publican, while understanding that he was accepted and embraced by God all the same. Ignatius was undergoing the Spiritual Exercises!

He was discovering that he was not the omnipotent conqueror. He was entering into a second Manresan stage.

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## INVITATION TO PRAYER

### The “bag man” rejoices at having crossed to the other side of history

Ignatius proposes in the Exercises that we begin our prayer with adoration, opening ourselves to Unfathomable Mystery, prostrating ourselves before God [SpEx 75]. After beginning this way, we suggest one of the many forms of prayer taught in the Exercises, specifically the form proposed on the first day [SpEx 45-54].

a) With the *memory*:

- Recall the path you have traced through the streets of Manresa; recall the details and the impact they have made on you.
- It is like browsing with delight through the pages of a photo album.

b) With the *understanding* (which means to “stand under,” which means to “look up to”):

- Consider and evaluate what all this means; enter into the heart of Ignatius in his first stage at Manresa.
- Assess the naiveté of his conquering temperament. Can you draw any conclusion from it for your own life?

c) With the *heart*, let your feelings go:

- Marvel at the beauty, the seriousness, and the simplicity of this first period.
- Allow all the experiences you’ve had while accompanying Ignatius rest tranquilly and cordially in your heart.



d) Finish by *dialoguing* with Jesus “as one friend talks to another” [SpEx 54]. You will probably have many things to talk about with him, concerning Ignatius and concerning yourself.

- Recite the prayer “Soul of Christ.” Imagine Ignatius, in love with the Lord, savoring the words of this prayer as he walks around the streets of Manresa. Jesus in person was healing all his inner wounds.

*Soul of Christ, sanctify me.*

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from the side of Christ, wash me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me.

Within your wounds hide me.

Do not allow me to be separated from you.

From the malevolent enemy defend me.

In the hour of my death call me,

and bid me come to you,

that with your saints I may praise you

forever and ever. Amen.

## 5 SECOND PERIOD: THE FRAGILITY OF IGNATIUS

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*From the adolescent euphoria of the newly converted man, to wrestling realistically with his own interior brokenness.*

The invincible nobleman began descending into the bitter waters within himself, and he understood his great fragility. “There flashed upon his mind the idea of the difficulty that attended the kind of life he had begun, and he felt as if he heard some one whispering to him, ‘How can you keep up for seventy years of your life these practices which you have begun?’ Knowing that this thought was a temptation of the evil one, he expelled it by this answer: ‘Can you, wretched one, promise me one hour of life?’” [*Autobiography* 20].

“He began to experience great changes in his soul. ... On noticing all this, he was surprised, wondering what could be the import of these changes which he had never before experienced, and he said to himself, ‘What new kind of life is this upon which I am entering?’” [*Autobiography* 21]

### **5.1 History: The spirited defender of Pamplona, ready to follow a little dog**

This second period must have lasted from mid-July to the beginning of October 1522. As we described in the previous chapter, the first stage can be summed up as “doing” (great penances, great things) and “more” (more than others, more than the saints). His fervor was exaggerated but at the same time revealed great generosity. Ignatius was spiritualizing his chivalrous vanity: now the knight of God was handing himself over to his new Lord in the most heroic way possible, with penances, prayers, and gallant feats that would distinguish himself above all others [SpEx 97]. He was seeking to win over his new Lord with “works.”

A few months previously, he had been living solely to achieve honors, fame, and important administrative posts in the Kingdom of Castile. Now he was beginning to discover that holiness was not something to be conquered; it was a gift to be received. He was making the unsettling discovery that what he was “conquer-

ing” was actually the murky waters of his inner being, reconciled at Montserrat but much too superficially.

Soon he felt tormented by the question of whether he would be able to continue this way of life. The peace he had gained while praying before the Virgin was slipping away from him. Memories of his past life began to afflict him with scruples as he dug up offenses that he thought he had left buried in Montserrat. As these recollections hammered away at him, he realized that his life was still far from being truly reconciled. Falling into desolation and tormented by scruples, he sought out a confessor to whom he might repeat his sins over and over again. Even so, he found no reconciliation either with himself or with God.

He was descending into the depths of his “interior well.” He was intensely experiencing his own limitations and realizing that he was totally incapable of forgiving himself. He felt great resistance to putting himself completely in the hands of God and letting go of the tiller by which he had always steered his life.

In his desolation he repeated that he would have been ready even to follow a little dog if it were able to show him the path for finding peace [*Autobiography* 23]. Here was the valiant defender of Pamplona, ready to follow a dog!

The most telling moment of this stage was the desperate “temptation to suicide” that he experienced when he was living in the Dominican priory (we will speak of that later). This man who had been accustomed to moving among the world of conquistadors was realizing that there was no way to “conquer” worthiness, integrity, reconciliation, happiness, holiness –they could only be received. All was grace. This was the great Ignatian revelation of Manresa.

### *5.1.2 Moving toward surrender*

The battle was no longer for the fortress of Pamplona but for his interior fortress. The weapons to be used were no longer “exterior” arms but “interior” ones. The goal was no longer self-sufficiency (I’m the captain of my own ship) but learning to live by trusting in God and letting himself be led by God. His plans for reaching God by his own strength were breaking apart. He was beginning to realize how vulnerable he was and how he alone could do nothing. God was teaching him how to abandon his all-powerful ego.

He left that dead-end street as soon as he accepted the futility of relying on his own bravery and his own justice as a way of reaching God. Once he stopped putting his faith in his own power and righteousness, he knew that he could count on the “righteousness that comes from God” [Rom 1,21]. With this realization Ignatius’s third stage at Manresa began. He no longer had to protect himself from the sins and the shadows of his broken inner reality.

The paradigms have been turned completely around. Later, in the Exercises he would describe this sublime experience of gratitude: “We cannot by ourselves bring on or retain great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual conso-

lation, because all these are a gift and grace from God our Lord and we should not build our nest in a house which belongs to Another, by puffing up our minds with pride or vainglory through which we attribute to ourselves the devotion or other features of spiritual consolation” [SpEx 322].

## **5.2 Geography. Contemplation of the Pilgrim in four relevant spaces: Viladordis, the Amigant Hospital, La Seu, and the Dominican Priory**

Our contemplation of the Pilgrim during these dark moments should envision the following scenes. Let us grant ourselves some time to contemplate the 16<sup>th</sup> century Pilgrim in these settings, as we read fragments from his *Autobiography* [20-25].

a) *The Sanctuary of Viladordis*. Ignatius was disturbed by his own question: “How can you keep up for seventy years of your life these practices which you have begun?” [*Autobiography* 20]. Continuing to act in his usual willful manner, he quickly gave himself over to even greater penances. In the beatification processes the witnesses claimed that Ignatius went to pray again in solitude at the Sanctuary of Viladordis, where he increased his harsh penances and fasts to an immoderate degree. After a few days some women, noticing that he wasn’t returning to the hospital for the needy, searched for him and finally found him in a critical state in Viladordis. The witnesses also stated that his fasting was the result of his scruples, which caused him to believe that his penances were still too little [Photos 15 and 16].

b) *The Amigant Hospital*. The women took Ignatius to the small hospital where the Amigant family used to receive two or three sick persons (it is presently the chapel of Saint Ignatius Malalt in the city hall plaza). He received care there for a few days, and when sufficiently recovered, he return to his usual residence, the hospital for the needy. The painting in the small present-day chapel depicts the great affection with which the people of Manresa cared for him (Photo 17). The Pilgrim stayed at the Amigant Hospital two or three times.

c) *The Basilica of La Seu*. Ignatius was severely tormented by memories of scenes of his past life. His scruples kept growing, like a snowball rolling down a hill, and the harshness of his penances decreased not at all. At these time he could be found sitting in La Seu, waiting for the confessor or praying from his abyss. He wanted the confessor to order him not to repeat all the sins that he had confessed before, but he dared not ask him to do that.

d) *The Dominican Priory*. When he first arrived in Manresa, he had stayed there several days. Now he spent several weeks there, during the most difficult moments of his desolation. During the long periods of prayer he prayed to God with all his might, asking him to free him from his distress, but the bitterness that flowed from deep within led him to desperation. Near his shelter was a deep hole, and on several occasions the frustrated “conqueror of holiness” felt tempted to end

his life. After the attacks of despair he would cry out: “My God, I will do nothing that might offend you.”

### 5.2.1 *By way of synthesizing*

This period of trial helped Ignatius discover that integrity, holiness, God’s light are not “conquered” but are gratuitously “received.” All his life he had placed great confidence in his own strength, but now he was beginning to place his confidence in God alone. He had always been the protagonist, but now the experiences he was going through were making him yield the protagonism to God.

He was learning to walk the path of gratuitous love, not that of conquest and merit. He was realizing that he no longer needed to protect himself from his own emptiness or from his guilt. Nor did he need to attribute to his own merit the gifts God was giving him. There remained only God and God’s mercy, God’s glory and his own weakness.

Ignatius was receiving a more authentic type of freedom than that which we saw in him when he first came down from Montserrat in a state of euphoria. Now he was beginning to free himself from his narcissistic ego and his self-centeredness. He has surrendered himself into the hands of God; he has turned over the steering wheel of his life. He himself would say that the spiritual path requires humility, detachment from self, and rejection of self-worship and narcissism. “For everyone ought to reflect that in all spiritual matters, the more one divests oneself of self-love, self-will, and self-interests, the more progress one will make” [SpEx 189].

Everything that Ignatius was experiencing in the streets of Manresa would form the basis of the Spiritual Exercises. In this third stage of his stay in Manresa he was formulating the essential nucleus of the Exercises.

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## INVITATION TO PRAYER

### **The fragility of Ignatius and my own fragility**

We suggest that you pray now according to the method outlined in the Exercises: “seeing the persons, listening to what they are saying, watching what they are doing” [SpEx 106-108].

We urge you to project yourself (physically or imaginatively) into Saint Dominic Plaza, the busy center of the city of Manresa [Photo 21]. Once you feel calm and relaxed, you can read this fragment from the *Autobiography* [23-24]:

At that time he lived in the Dominican monastery, in a little cell which the Fathers had allotted to him. He kept up his usual custom of praying on bended

knees for seven hours a day, and scourged himself three times a day and during the night. But all this did not remove his scruples, which had been tormenting him for months. One day, when terribly tormented, he began to pray. During his prayer, he cried out to God in a loud voice: “O Lord, help me, for I find no remedy among men, nor in any creature! If I thought I could find one, no labor would seem too great to me. Show me some one! O Lord! where may I find one? Even if it means I have to follow a little dog so that it will give me relief, I will do it!” While tortured by these thoughts, several times he was violently tempted to cast himself out of the large window of his cell. This window was quite near the place where he was praying. But since he knew that it would be a sin to take his own life, he began to pray, “O Lord, I will not do anything to offend Thee.” He repeated these words frequently with his former prayer.

Read the passage over again slowly, evoking the scenes. You can follow the guide of the Exercises:

a) *See the persons:*

- The people of today coming and going in the plaza, conversing, doing business, or simply seated on a bench.
- Contemplate Ignatius in the same place 500 years ago, broken and perplexed.
- Third, take a look at yourself, your possible fragilities, weaknesses, disorders.

b) *Listen to what they are saying:*

- What are the people in the street saying in the midst of the noise of the city?
- What are the words emerging from the depths of Ignatius’s soul?

c) *Watch what they are doing:*

- What are the people in the street doing?
- What is Ignatius doing and not doing while he prays in his room?
- What are you doing and not doing with your life?

d) Meditate on all this slowly, without hurrying, in dialogue with the Lord.

- If you still have time, consider whether there have been distressing and perhaps painful moments in your life. If there have been, you can say, looking back, that they have been the paths by which God has been teaching you and leading you.
- Recall the personal experiences that have convinced you that “I alone am not enough” and that “my fragility needs to be fortified by grace.” These are definitely experiences of surrendering one’s inner strength.
- End your prayer with an Our Father, recited amid all the people in the plaza while you evoke Ignatius and look at yourself. Perhaps each word of the Our Father is heard with a new tonality.

## 6 THIRD PERIOD: ALL IS GRACE!

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*When he comprehends that he is not in total control,  
he begins to receive a torrent of completely gratuitous light.*

When Ignatius, realizing that he could conquer neither God's "light" nor the depths of his own being, abandoned himself into the hands of God, then he found himself filled with continuous moments of "illumination." We will see that he was given a profound knowledge of God's inner life (the mystery of the Trinity) and an intimate familiarity with the humanity of the Lord Jesus. In other words, he received "wisdom."

### 6.1 History. The time of the great Manresan illuminations

The pinnacle of this stage is what is called the "illumination on the Cardener." When he was elderly, Ignatius was coaxed in a fraternal way by his companions to tell them something of his life story. He recounted that once, after leaving Saint Paul's Church in Manresa and while walking by the Cardener River, he sat down and contemplated the stream. At that moment "the eyes of his soul were opened. He did not have any special vision, but his mind was enlightened on many subjects, spiritual and intellectual. So clear was this knowledge that from that day everything appeared to him in a new light." And he added: "Such was the abundance of this light in his mind that all the divine helps received, and all the knowledge acquired up to his sixty-second year, were not equal to it" [*Autobiography* 30].

This third stage in his time in Manresa lasted from October 1522 until February 1523.

### 6.2 Geography. A contemplative stroll through the most important places in this period

#### 6.2.1 *El Rapte, the city streets, La Seu, and Saint Dominic Plaza*

a) *Saint Lucia Hospital for the Needy*, where Ignatius mostly stayed, was popularly known as "El Rapte" ("The Rapture"). We have mentioned the place before,

and we return to it now. A local tradition relates that one afternoon, while compline was being sung in the hospital chapel, Ignatius experienced a “rapture” that left him immobile on the floor for eight days [Photo 18]. Whatever truth there is in this tradition, it is undeniable that the eleven months Ignatius spent in Manresa were for him a kind of “rapture,” an ecstatic state that made him come out of himself and find himself directly before God and with God. During these eleven months he was “captivated” by God and entered fully into the Mystery of God. He slowly evolved from being a splendid knight to being a pilgrim who had let go of his self-sufficiency and who walked humbly, alone and on foot, with very few belongings.

We should kneel down and keep a profound silence before the image of Ignatius lying asleep but caught up in a vision of God’s ineffable Mystery. “Rapture” or ecstasy describes well the great illuminations that Ignatius received in this third stage.

The austere steps of the entrance to the hospital chapel are blessed to have been the cradle of the first retreats Ignatius gave. It was there, during this third stage, that he would bring together for the first time groups of persons to whom he would give the Spiritual Exercises in rudimentary form. Those retreats had the enchantment of being new and original; they were the first page of the 500-hundred year history of the Exercises [Photos 19 and 20].

b) *The plazas and streets of the city.* During this new stage Ignatius was eager to help people. He began to integrate his prayer and his ministrations to others. “Besides his seven hours of prayer, he busied himself with helping souls that came looking for him” [Autobiography 26]. He was beginning to be a contemplative in action, capable of finding God in all things.

c) *La Seu and Saint Dominic Plaza.* Let us enter again into the silence of La Seu, or let us sit on one of the benches in the noisy Plaza of Saint Dominic [Photo 21]. To the Pilgrim everything looked fresh and new; he was fascinated as he began to experience God and the world in a completely new way. His *Autobiography* [28-29] gives us a glimpse of what he was going through:

- *God is music, not geometry.* God is not a “mysterious enigma.” Ignatius has received a new understanding of the Trinity (most likely in Saint Dominic Plaza). The Divine Trinity is like three notes sounding in unison and forming a single chord. He explains it with these words: “He seemed to behold the Blessed Trinity in the form of three notes; this vision affected him so much that he could not refrain from tears and sighs. ... Even up to the time of dinner he could not withhold his tears, and after dinner his joy and consolation were so great that he could speak of no subject except the Blessed Trinity. ... Such an impression was made on him on that occasion that during all his life, whenever he prayed to the Blessed Trinity, he experienced great devotion” [Autobiography 28]
- *Nature appears to him as transparent and full of light.* It was an experience



of Nature's splendor that filled him with joy. We might imagine him in the Plaza of La Seu as he beholds the river and the smiling green Valley of Paradise. But he sees much further than that. He discovers the Creator in all his glory. He sees everything coming forth from God and everything returning to God. "One time, to his great joy, God permitted him to understand how He had created this world. This vision presented to him a white object, with rays emanating from it. From this object God sent forth light" [Autobiography 29]

- *He understands that he has to refrain from severe penances.* "After he had begun to receive from God consolations, and fruitful lights for the direction of others, he gave up his former rigorous penances. At that time he trimmed his nails and hair" [Autobiography 29]. Those first extreme rigors had no doubt been helpful, but the new "philosophy" of Ignatius required him to move among the people, and this commitment demanded different behavior.
- *The Eucharist becomes "transfigured" for him.* He understands its meaning profoundly, the Mass appears luminous to him, and he becomes keenly aware of the presence of the Lord in the Sacrament. "While assisting at Mass, he had another vision. ... At the elevation of the body of Christ Our Lord he beheld, with the eyes of his soul, white rays descending from above. ... The manner in which Our Lord Jesus Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament was clearly and vividly stamped upon his mind" [Autobiography 29].
- *He is made vividly aware of the "humanity" of Christ.* He experiences the "carnality" of that man who is divine (the same experience that is radically expressed in Saint John's Gospel: "the Word became flesh" (Jn 1,14). "Often in prayer, and even during a long space of time, he saw the humanity of Christ with the eyes of the soul. The form under which this vision appeared was that of a white body" [Autobiography 29].

These "consolations" left him totally transformed in a way that he would never have been able to accomplish by his own strength. However, the most important of all his illuminations occurred while he was walking near the Cardener one day, on his way to the chapel of Saint Paul.

### 6.2.2. *The Pool of the Light and the Cross of Tort*

#### *The extraordinary illumination by the Cardener*

It was an unexpected moment of grace, the culmination of the Pilgrim's path during his days in Manresa. It is commemorated now near the Balconada neighborhood, in a place dubbed the "Pool of Light" [Photo 22]. Let us listen to how Ignatius himself in later years explained the experience:

One day he went to the Church of Saint Paul, situated about a mile from Manresa. Near the road is a stream, on the bank of which he sat, and gazed at the deep waters flowing by. While seated there, the eyes of his soul were opened. He did not have any special vision, but his mind was enlightened on many subjects, spiritual and intellectual. So clear was this knowledge that from that day everything appeared to him in a new light. Such was the abundance of this light in his mind that all the divine helps received, and all the knowledge acquired up to his sixty-second year, were not equal to it. From that day he seemed to be quite another man, and possessed of a new intellect [*Autobiography* 30].

Let us sit down in some quiet corner where we have a view of the Cardener and Montserrat. For a long while, let us allow the silence to invade us from within. It was here that Ignatius finally “gelled.” It is the holiest place in the Manresa that Ignatius knew. All the Ignatian spiritualities and all the social, cultural, educational, and intellectual work inspired by Ignatius’s vision have their eyes fixed on this place.

Let us imagine Ignatius in Manresa, interiorly moved at finding himself enveloped in the Mystery of God and feeling that this Mystery was inspiring his journey. Many times in later life he would remember this foundational corner with a view of the Cardener and Montserrat. To commemorate what Ignatius experienced here, this place has been baptized the “Pool of Light.” It contains a spiral rising up from and descending into the pool, with the names of many mystics of all ages and all religious traditions who have received illuminations from God. The symbolism helps us to appreciate and to desire the light given to these women and men to make them holy and wise.

Certainly for us too, in the course of our lives, there have been moments of illumination. They may have been brilliant bursts of light or simply tiny flames that show us the path. Perhaps we have a hard time recognizing them: sometimes the light shines so steadily and accompanies us so gently that we hardly take notice.

### *The Cross of Tort*

Ignatius commented in his *Autobiography* [31]: “This illumination lasted a long time, after which he went to kneel before a cross that was there, to give thanks to God.” The culmination of Ignatius’s pilgrimage in Manresa took place at the Cross of Tort. We can now review the stages he passed through:

- As a young Basque aristocrat, he was sent to be trained in the courts of Castile in order to become a dignitary in the world of nobility, governance, diplomacy, and if necessary, war. As you would expect, he was a social climber,! He knew that he would ascend to the greatest honors by dint of his strength, his intelligence, his ability, and his will.

- At Pamplona a cannonball (enemy fire or friendly fire?) forced him to reconsider his destiny, and he decided to change direction, to seek a new paradigm.
- He began his pilgrimage thinking that he had already taken leave of everything. He arrived at Manresa without his sword or his splendid raiment, but he had still not free himself of his spirit of “conquistador.” The difference was that now he had a different objective: he was out to “conquer” the highest honors, not in the realm of the emperor, but in the Kingdom of God. But he still continued to believe that his strength, skill, intelligence, and will would enable him to climb to the heights of sanctity and excel in the following of Christ.
- The first and second stages in Manresa were characterized by the mentality of a person who naively thinks that one can “achieve” sanctity. And in this regard Ignatius ended up defeated by God. At the climax of his confusion and despair, having discovered that he could do nothing on his own, he was ready to follow even a little dog: “O Lord, help me, for I find no remedy among men, nor in any creature! If I thought I could find one, no labor would seem too great to me. Show me some one! O Lord! where may I find one? Even if it means I have to follow a little dog so that it will give me relief, I will do it!” [*Autobiography* 23].
- Finally, the Pilgrim was freed of all the Pharisaical attitudes that made him believe that he could control God and buy him off with good works. He then became the “publican” who recognized himself as a “sinner and at yet called to be a companion of Jesus” (definition of a Jesuit according to General Congregation 32).
- Here Ignatian spirituality was born! The disciples of Ignatius prostrate themselves before the Cross of Tort and receive with gratitude this “philosophy of gratuitousness.”
- The interior trajectory of Ignatius’s eleven months in Manresa has been captured in the pedagogical method of his Spiritual Exercises, which was the background against which he wrote the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus. The Exercises were also what inspired him to promote all kinds of works, from catechizing children to setting up social centers that helped prostitutes, from establishing colleges and universities to working in hospitals for the poor, from trying to reconcile political powers in conflict to sending many of his companions to distant lands.

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## INVITATION TO PRAYER

### Overflowing with gratitude

We propose to you a very simple prayer. Imagine Ignatius in Manresa overflowing with gratitude and asking, as he proposes in the Exercises, “interior knowledge of all the good I have received, in order that, stirred to profound gratitude, I may become able to love and to serve the Divine Majesty in all things” (SpEx 233).

a) Adore the Trinity as Ignatius did: as a musical chord composed of three notes. Adore the Humanity of our God. Adore God present in the splendor of Nature.

b) Then review the itinerary you have followed so far, aided by the suggestions for contemplation presented in this booklet. Savor the most luminous moments, like someone paging through a photo album.

c) If you like, write down on a piece of paper a litany of all the desires that have arisen from your heart as you have visited these “holy places” of the Ignatian Manresa. After each phrase, write (or sing interiorly) “to love and to serve in all things.”

d) End your prayer with the offering of self that Ignatius proposes in the Exercises:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will –all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you, O Lord. All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me love of yourself along with your grace, for that is enough for me.

Perhaps in our contemplation we have been moved to utter this prayer, or at least we have asked the Lord for the grace to be able one day to say it from our heart.

In 2008, at his audience with the Jesuits during General Congregation 35, Pope Benedict XVI confessed that this was “a prayer that always seemed to me too sublime, to the point where I hardly dared to pray it, but it is still a prayer that we should always keep repeating.”

## PHOTOGRAPHIC ANNEX

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1. View of the interior of the Cave of Saint Ignatius
2. Grotto on the bank of the Cardener River
3. Saint Ignatius praying in the Cave – Painting of Martí Coronas (20<sup>th</sup> century) in the Center of Spirituality of the Cave





4. Saint Ignatius writing the Exercises – Alabaster altarpiece of Joan Grau (17<sup>th</sup> century)
5. The wounded Ignatius at Pamplona – Bronze sculpture of Carles Flotats (20<sup>th</sup> century) in the Cave of Saint Ignatius
6. The vigil at Montserrat – Majolica ceramic of Joan B. Guibernau (20<sup>th</sup> century) in the Cave of Saint Ignatius



- 7. The view of Montserrat that Saint Ignatius had from the Cave
- 8. The Cross of the Guide and the Vell Bridge. In the background, the Basilica of La Seu and the Center of Spirituality of the Cave
- 9. The Cardener River and the Vell Bridge



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22  
cc

Hôtel Dieu, Paris, XVIe. siècle



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10. Medieval hospital similar to the Santa Lucia Hospital for the Needy in Manresa (11<sup>th</sup> century engraving)
11. Interior of the chapel of Santa Lucia Hospital



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- 12. Detail of the chapel of Santa Lucia Hospital
- 13. Exterior of the Basilica of La Seu
- 14. Interior of the Basilica of La Seu

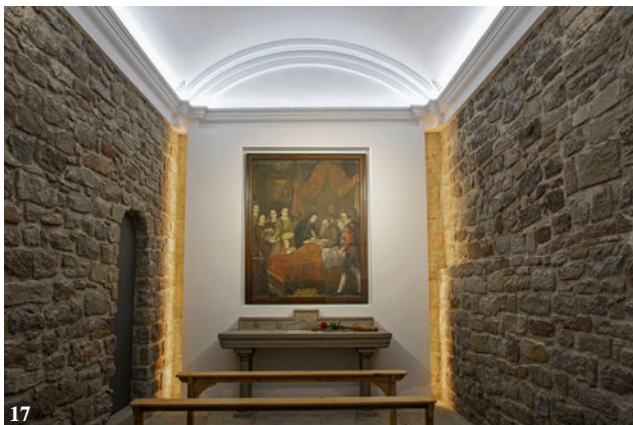


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- 15. Exterior of the sanctuary of Santa Maria de Viladordis
- 16. Interior of the sanctuary of Santa Maria de Viladordis
- 17. Interior of the chapel of Saint Ignatius Malalt in the Amigant Hospital of Manresa





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18. Image of the "rapture" of Saint Ignatius in the Hospital for the Needy
19. Entrance of the hospital chapel where Saint Ignatius used to give the Exercises
20. Saint Ignatius giving the first Exercises – Bronze sculpture of Carles Flotats (20<sup>th</sup> century)



19



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- 21. Saint Dominic Plaza,  
site of the Dominican  
priory
- 22. The Pool of Light,  
where the Extraordi-  
nary Illumination is  
commemorated



“**Guides**”, with this verb Ignatius Loyola modestly expresses his great desire to help others. It is under this motto connoting service and simplicity that the Ignatian School of Spirituality (*Escuela Ignaciana de Espiritualidad - EIDES*) offers these series of materials.

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