

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

1491-1556

Founder of the Society of Jesus,
Saint Ignatius was born in 1491 in the castle
of Loyola in Spain.

He led a dissolute life until 1521 when in the battle of Pamplona because of a bad wound he was forced to remain for a long time in bed in the castle of his father. During this time, he had the occasion to read numerous religious texts, dedicated in particular to the life of Jesus and the saints. Inspired by the life of Saint Francis of Assisi and of other great spiritual figures, he decided to convert and went to the Holy Land with the intention of staying there forever. However, circumstances constrained him to return to Spain. In this period he elaborated, from personal experiences, his method of

and the more frequently he saw it, the more consolation he had; on the contrary, when it disappeared he would experience displeasure. One day, kneeling in front of a cross, there appeared to him that figure which he had contemplated many times in the past and which he had not succeeded in understanding: that is, that something described previously and which appeared to him very beautiful and with many eyes, but now being in front of the cross, he saw very well that the thing so enchanting did not have the usual brilliance. And he had a very clear understanding, to which his will gave total assent that it was



prayer and contemplation, based on *discernment*, which would later appear in the renowned *Spiritual Exercises*.

In 1552, he visited the Monastery of Montserrat where he laid down his military drapery before an image of the Virgin Mary. In the Monastery of Manresa, in Catalonia, he began to practice a very severe asceticism. He had various visions, among which one of the devil, as he relates later on in his *Autobiography*: “At Manresa during a stay in a charitable institution, it often happened to him in full daylight to see in the air close up to him something which filled him with consolation because it was very beautiful, full of charm. He did not succeed in understanding what sort of thing it was; in some ways it seemed to him to have a form of a serpent with many points that glistened like eyes, even if they were not eyes. On contemplating it, he experienced a lot of joy and consolation,

the devil. Subsequently, for a long time, it continued to frequently appear to him. But he with a gesture of mockery with his staff which he always had with him would chase it away.” Saint Ignatius died at Rome July 31, 1556.