



# The Spiritual Exercises

*St. Ignatius of Loyola*

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## **The Spiritual Exercises** St. Ignatius of Loyola

Of all of the important Catholic men and women who have been venerated over the last 2,000 years, one of the faith's most popular and influential men also lived one of the most unique lives. Like Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) found God about as far away from church as possible; it was during military service that he underwent a remarkable conversion.

A Spanish knight who hailed from a noble Basque family, Ignatius seemed destined for military glory until he was badly wounded in 1521 during the Battle of Pamplona. While convalescing, Ignatius began reading *De Vita Christi* by Ludolph of Saxony, after which he began a tireless career in service of the Catholic Church. After spending several years studying the faith, Ignatius formed the Society of Jesus in 1539, and as its Superior General, he sent followers as missionaries across Europe to create schools, colleges, and seminaries. **The Jesuits remain active across the world nearly 500 years later. By 1548, he had published his famous *Spiritual Exercises*, which help the faithful commit themselves to Christ by conducting different mental exercises. The *Spiritual Exercises* continue to be wildly popular across the world today, even among non-Catholics.**

**By the time Ignatius died in 1556, he was one of the most important Catholics of the Counter-Reformation, and it took less than 100 years for him to be beatified and canonized as a saint.**

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