

The Life of Saint Ignatius Loyola (Part 4)



The little band of Ignatius and his followers wanted to fulfill their vow of going to the Holy Land and so, after Ignatius had recovered from ill health which forced him to go home for a time, he met his followers in Venice on January 6, 1537. Unfortunately, the route to the Holy Land was blocked by the Turks, who were refusing Christians the ability to travel to the Holy Places. They decided to wait for a year before fulfilling their vow. If this was not to happen, they decided to put themselves at the disposal of the Pope. During their wait, they were all ordained priests, although it took Ignatius eighteen months to prepare for his first Mass.

After a year of waiting, the situation was still not good for their travel to the Holy Land, and so Ignatius and Laynez started for Roma after sending the others in pairs to town throughout Italy. On the way, Ignatius had a vision in which he saw God the Father associating Ignatius with His Son, Jesus. Shortly after this, Ignatius decided that the name of his little band would be the "Company of Jesus." Company referred back to Ignatius' time in the military because he looked at their group as being "Knights for Christ." It was only later that they became known as the "Jesuits."

Pope Paul III received the Fathers, listened to them and decided to call the whole group to Rome. The Church was faced with many challenges at the time: the aftermath of the Reformation, the expansion of the Faith through missionary work and the need to educate the faithful and religious better than before. Because of this he wanted Ignatius and his followers to become a formal religious order and they were incorporated by a papal document on September 27, 1540. In April of 1541, Ignatius, over his own protests, was elected Superior General.

When Ignatius finally drew up the Constitutions of his new order, he mentioned specifically the apostolate work that the Fathers would be engaged in:

- ❖ Foreign missions at the request of the Pope
- ❖ The education of youth of all classes
- ❖ The instruction of the ignorant and the poor
- ❖ Ministry to the sick and prisoners and all those who were outcasts

This was to lead to a great spreading of the Gospel all over the world, even to the future United States....

