



## *Essential Evangelization*

### **A Soldier for Christ**

The youngest of 13 children, St. Ignatius was born in 1491 in the family castle in Spain. At an early age, Ignatius had dreams of being a valiant soldier and courting a certain noble lady of the court and ultimately bringing honor to his family name. The time soon came when Ignatius was pressed into service as a soldier in defending the town of Pamplona against the attacking French. In this outnumbered battle, a cannon ball wounded one of Ignatius' legs and broke the other thus ending his military career. Recovering in the castle of Loyola, Ignatius was at first dismayed that the only books they had for him to pass the time were the Life of Christ and the Lives of the Saints. Soon his dreams of being a soldier waned for a new zeal for the Catholic Church and disgust for his selfish dreams and past sins.

Ignatius was then determined to walk where our Lord walked, and on his way to Jerusalem, he had a vision of Our Lady and Child Jesus at the Shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat. Making an all night vigil and confession in this church he left his sword and knife at the altar and gave up his fine clothes to a poor man. Further down the road, Ignatius stopped in the small town of Manresa, Spain, where for ten months he fasted and prayed living out of a cave. It was out of this experience he began writing what later became to be known as the *Spiritual Exercises*. These writings, which center on immersing oneself in Christ to find God's will for your life, soon became the cornerstone of the new order of Ignatius' band of brothers, "The Company of Jesus." Many first hated St. Ignatius because of his humble lifestyle, but were soon won over by his great love for all. His "company" outnumbered 1000, including another great saint, Francis Xavier, in the 15 short years after the order's founding and his death on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1556. His feast day is this coming Saturday. Today Saint Ignatius is the Patron Saint of Soldiers and the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, is one of the largest Catholic orders with almost 20,000 strong in 112 countries. What one soldier can do!

*This is one of a series of articles  
on Evangelization from the  
Evangelization Committee*