



# DECISION

*Ignatius of Loyola*

*Moving past the past,  
As God smiles on your future.*

February 8, 2011

## ***Ponder It***

- What regrets do you have?
- What sins have you committed that you're ashamed of?
- What does God think of those sins?

Psalm 103:12, Jeremiah 31:34b

## ***Ignatius of Loyola***

As a boy Ignatius had left the gloomy castle of Loyola near the Pyrenees to enter the court of his father's noble friend. He had grown into little more than an engaging "playboy," spending his days in military games or reading popular chivalrous romances, his nights pursuing less noble adventures with local girls.<sup>1</sup>

At an early age he was made a cleric. We do not know when, or why he was released from clerical obligations. He was brought up in the household of Juan Velásquez de Cuellar, *contador mayor* to Ferdinand and Isabella, and in his suite probably attended the court from time to time, though not in the royal service. This was perhaps the time of his greatest dissipation and laxity. He was affected and extravagant about his hair and dress, consumed with the desire of winning glory, and would seem to have been sometimes involved in those darker intrigues, for which handsome young courtiers too often think themselves licensed.<sup>2</sup>

Ignatius moved away from the life he had known, having been involved with church life it seems as a young man. He was free from restraint and living a lifestyle and position that afforded him virtually anything he could want.

## ***The Prodigal Returns***

**Luke 15:11-24**

### ***Think about it:***

- *In what ways have you been a prodigal?*
- *Did you come to your senses as the prodigal son and return to your Father?*
- *What transpired to convince you to come back?*

In 1517 a change for the better seems to have taken place; Velásquez died and Ignatius took service in the army. The turning-point of his life came in 1521. While the French were besieging the citadel of Pampeluna, a cannon ball, passing between Ignatius' legs, tore open the left calf and broke the right shin (Whit-Tuesday, 20 May, 1521). With his fall the garrison lost heart and surrendered, but he was well treated by the French and carried on a litter to Loyola, where his leg had to be rebroken and reset, and afterwards a protruding end of the bone was sawn off, and the limb, having been shortened by clumsy setting, was stretched out by weights... So far Ignatius had shown none but the ordinary virtues

---

<sup>1</sup> Bruce E. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, pp. 274-275

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07639c.htm>



DECISION

of the Spanish officer. His dangers and sufferings has doubtless done much to purge his soul, but there was no idea yet of remodelling his life on any higher ideals. Then, in order to divert the weary hours of convalescence, he asked for the romances of chivalry, his favourite reading, but there were none in the castle, and instead they brought him the lives of Christ and of the saints, and he read them in the same quasi-competitive spirit with which he read the achievements of knights and warriors. "Suppose I were to rival this saint in fasting, that one in endurance, that other in pilgrimages." He would then wander off into thoughts of chivalry, and service to fair ladies, especially to one of high rank, whose name is unknown. Then all of a sudden, he became conscious that the after-effect of these dreams was to make him dry and dissatisfied, while the ideas of falling into rank among the saints braced and strengthened him, and left him full of joy and peace. Next it dawned on him that the former ideas were of the world, the latter God-sent; finally, worldly thoughts began to lose their hold, while heavenly ones grew clearer and dearer. One night as he lay awake, pondering these new lights, "he saw clearly", so says his autobiography, "the image of Our Lady with the Holy Child Jesus", at whose sight for a notable time he felt a reassuring sweetness, which eventually left him with such a loathing of his past sins, and especially for those of the flesh, that every unclean imagination seemed blotted out from his soul, and never again was there the least consent to any carnal thought. His conversion was now complete.<sup>3</sup>

## ***Embracing the Calling***

Ignatius is known for his ability to let go of his past, and move forward in God's forgiveness and embrace his calling as a spiritual leader. He went on to be one of the most influential church leaders ever. His writings about spiritual disciplines are still studied and implemented today.

### ***Think about it:***

- *Is regret holding you back?*
- *What lesson have you learned that you keep having to learn over and over?*
  - *What will it take to move forward and past it?*
  - *What changes do you need to make to your everyday life that will help you get there?*
- ***If God can use a playboy dreamer like Ignatius, what could he accomplish through you?***

*Jeremiah 29:11*

### **1 John 4:4**

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Our past does not define how much God can use us.

***Only our willingness to surrender to God today  
limits what we can accomplish through him tomorrow.***

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07639c.htm>