

*The pow'rs of death have done their worst,  
But Christ their legions hath dispersed;  
Let shouts of holy joy outburst.  
Alleluia!*

*The three sad days have quickly sped;  
He rises glorious from the dead:  
All glory to our risen Head!  
Alleluia!*<sup>1</sup>



In the summer of 1539, a Spaniard who had begun his adult life fighting for the king of Spain enlisted for a different cause. Ignatius Loyola, son of a noble Basque family but for many years a priest and earnest servant of the Catholic Church, was now asking Pope Paul III to let him establish a new religious order. Five years before, Loyola had taken the first steps in formalizing the intense devotion that already characterized his life. With six companions—Nicolás Bobadilla, Pierre Favre, Diego Laynez, Simón Rodríguez, Alfonso Salmerón, and Francis Xavier (one from France, one from Portugal, and four from different regions of Spain)—Loyola had sworn vows of poverty and chastity; together they had pledged themselves to seek the conversion of Turkish Muslims in and around Jerusalem. At that gathering in Paris on August 15, 1534, Loyola and his friends also agreed that, if their original intention could not be fulfilled, they would then place themselves at the disposal of the pope for whatever service he would assign. As it turned out, circumstances prevented their journeying to the East and now indeed they were offering themselves directly to the church.

Loyola's journey from Spanish soldier to papal servant was not an easy one. At about age thirty he had been wounded at the battle of Pamplona, fought between Spain and France in May 1521. During a long convalescence he was given devotional literature on the life of Christ. This literature so affected him that he abandoned his career as a soldier. When fully recuperated, Loyola journeyed to the Holy Land and then began study for the priesthood. But by that time he had also

1. "The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done," trans. Francis Pott, *Trinity Hymnal*, rev. ed. (Atlanta: Great Commission Publications, 1990), 275.

## Loyola on Meditation

The following is a sample of the directions for meditation in Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. It comes from the third of four "weeks" and is numbered sections 200–203 in modern translations.

### Second Contemplation

*In the morning. From the last supper through the agony in the garden.*

Prayer. The usual preparatory prayer.

**First Prelude.** This is the history of the mystery. Here it will be as follows. Jesus our Lord came down with the disciples from the supper which had taken place on Mt. Zion. After crossing the city of Jerusalem and the valley outside its walls, they came to the garden of Gethsemane, near the foot of the Mt. of Olives. Taking three of the disciples with him, then going a little further by himself, Jesus began to pray, a prayer so intense that he began to sweat drops of blood. Three times he prayed and three times went to rouse the disciples from sleep. When Judas arrived with the soldiers, betraying the Lord with a kiss, and Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest, Jesus was seized like a common criminal and led through the valley up to the house of Annas.

**Second Prelude.** This is to see the place. Here it will be to consider the way from Mt. Zion to the garden, and also the breadth, length and appearance of the garden.

**Third Prelude.** This is to ask for what I desire. In the passion it is appropriate to ask for sorrow with Christ in sorrow, to be broken with Christ broken, and for tears and interior suffering because of Christ's great suffering for me.<sup>1</sup>

begun to refine a course of discipleship that would later be called the *Spiritual Exercises*. Although later published as a book, the *Exercises* were designed for face-to-face communication. They asked for an intense period of meditation and prayer structured as week-long contemplations of, first, the individual's own sinfulness; second, the kingship of Christ; third, the passion of Christ; and last, the risen life of Christ. Of these *Exercises* the modern Anglican evangelical J. I. Packer has observed that they "appeal to the will through understanding, imagination and conscience. They remain a potent aid to self-know-



This seventeenth-century painting shows Loyola receiving final approval for the Jesuits from Pope Paul III.

Verlag Herden, Freiburg

edge and devotion to the Lord Jesus, even for those outside the Catholicism in which they are so strongly rooted.<sup>2</sup>

Loyola's own use of the exercises transformed him as thoroughly as Martin Luther's contemplation of justification by grace had transformed the German reformer. The difference in transformations was not in degree, but in kind. Where Luther had been drawn *away from* the Catholic Church by his Christian pilgrimage, Loyola was drawn *deeper into* the church.

Loyola studied theology for eleven years, first at the universities of Barcelona, Alcalá, and Salamanca, and then from 1528 to 1535 at the University of Paris. While in Paris, Loyola was so zealous that, for a brief period, he was investigated by the Inquisition as someone likely to disturb the peace and good order of the church. But while some in Paris were uneasy with Loyola's intense spirituality, others were drawn to him as a beacon of truth and purpose. The band that pledged themselves to missionary service was the result.

Loyola's petition for a new religious order did not receive an immediate response. More than a year elapsed from the time of its submission to Paul III's issuance of the papal bull on September 27, 1540, that

2. J. I. Packer, "Ignatius Loyola," in *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 411.

formally established the Society of Jesus. A hint of scandal from his years as a Paris student still hung about Loyola. In addition, the petition for the new order had been sponsored by Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, a major force in the councils of the Catholic Church, but also a cardinal suspect in some Catholic eyes because of his desire to bend as far as possible in seeking reconciliation with the Protestants.<sup>3</sup> Despite possible misgivings, the bull was issued. Its title, *Regimini militantis ecclesiae* (On the government of the church militant), spoke for its fervor. The specifications of the bull outlined clearly what sort of society the Jesuits would be:

Let all the members of the Company know and bear in mind, not only in the early days of their profession but through all the days of their life, that this entire Company and all who compose it are engaged in a conflict for God under the obedience of the most sacred Lord the Pope, and his successors in the pontificate. And although we have learned from the Gospel, and know by the orthodox faith, and firmly profess that all the faithful in Christ Jesus are subject to the Roman Pontiff, as the Head and the Vicar of Jesus Christ, nevertheless, for the greater humility of our Society, and the perfect mortification of each, and the abnegation of our wills, we have deemed it to be very helpful to take upon ourselves, beyond the bond common to all the faithful, a special vow. It is meant so to bind that whatsoever the present Roman Pontiff and his successors may command us concerning the advancement of souls and the spreading of the faith, we shall be obliged to obey instantly as far as lies in us, without evasion or excuse, going to whatever country into which they may send us, whether among the Turks or other heathen, and even to the Indies, or among whatsoever heretics and schismatics, or among any believers whatsoever.<sup>4</sup>

Thus was founded what the modern historian John Olin has rightly called "the most powerful instrument of Catholic revival and resurgence in this era of religious crisis."<sup>4</sup>

It is indeed difficult to exaggerate the practical and symbolic significance of the founding of the Jesuits. This founding represented, first, one of the finest expressions of the Catholic Reformation that, shortly after Protestant reform began, thoroughly revitalized the Roman Catholic Church. Although there would be many sources and influences contributing to the Catholic Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits would be the most remarkable in winning Protestant regions back to Rome

3. Quoted in John C. Olin, ed., *The Catholic Reformation: Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola, Reform in the Church, 1495-1540* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 204-5.

4. *Ibid.*, 198.