

In the 'Pilgrim's Testament', Ignatius Loyola tells his own life story. The whole 'Testament' sets out with a "conversion-beginning" when Ignatius was 30 years old. The episode took place during the 1551 siege of Pamplona. His leg shattered by a cannon ball, Ignatius was a man with great desires and with a rare courage so as to bear the atrocious pain...!

Years later, the 62-year old Ignatius consented in 1553 to fulfil the desire of some of his companions expressed by Nadal thus: "I pray and plead the Father [Master Ignatius] to accept to expose the manner by which the Lord has guided him from the beginning of his conversion in order that this narrative may be for us the Testament and teaching of our Father".

Ignatius' life narrative: a testament. It is not a biography (not all of Ignatius' life is narrated), neither an autobiography (Ignatius did not wish to relate his life, let alone to put himself to words!). Of his life, he shares what could have been useful to his companions. Thus, as a transmission of Ignatius' personal experience, the Testament can lead each of us to the specific manner through which the Pilgrim is grasped and guided by the Lord.

[5] After the flesh and excess bone were cut away, means were taken so the leg would not be so short; many ointments were applied to it, and, as it was stretched continually with instruments, he suffered martyrdom for many days.

*Source: Olin, John C. (ed.) 1974. *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola with related documents*. [English translation by Joseph F. O'Callaghan.]. Harper Torchbooks – Harper & Row. New York-San Francisco-London. 112 pp.*

TWO SPIRITS

But Our Lord was restoring his health, and he was getting well. In everything else he was healthy except that he could not stand easily on his leg and had to stay in bed. As he was much given to reading worldly and fictitious books, usually called books of chivalry, when he felt better he asked to be given some of them to pass the time. But in that house none of those that he usually read could be found, so they gave him a Life of Christ and a book of the lives of the saints in Spanish.

[6] As he read them over many times, he became rather fond of what he found written there. Putting his reading aside, he sometimes stopped to think about the things he had read and at other times about the things of the world that he used to think about before. Of the many vain things that presented themselves to him, one took such a hold on his heart that he was absorbed in thinking about it for two or three or four hours without realizing it: he imagined what he would do in the service of a certain lady, the means he would take so he could go to the country where she lived, the verses, the words he would say to her, the deeds of arms he would do in her service. He became so conceited with this that he did not consider how impossible it would be because the lady was not of the lower nobility, nor was she a countess or a duchess, but her station was higher than any of these.

[7] Nevertheless, Our Lord assisted him, causing other thoughts that arose from the things he read to follow these. While reading the life of Our Lord and of the saints, he stopped to think, reasoning within himself, "What if I should do what St. Francis did, what St. Dominic did?" So he pondered over many things that he found to be good, always proposing to himself what was difficult and serious, and as he proposed them, they seemed to him easy to accomplish. But his every thought was to say to himself, "St. Dominic did this, therefore, I have to do it. St. Francis did this, therefore, I have to do it." These thoughts also lasted a good while, but when other matters intervened, the worldly thoughts mentioned above returned, and he also spent much time on them. This succession of such diverse thoughts, either of the worldly deeds he wished to achieve or of the deeds of God that came to his imagination, lasted for a long time, and he always dwelt at length on the thought before him, until he tired of it and put it aside and turned to other matters.

[8] Yet there was this difference. When he was thinking about the things of the world, he took much delight in them, but afterwards, when he was tired and put them aside, he found that he was dry and discontented. But when he thought of going to Jerusalem, barefoot and eating nothing but herbs and undergoing all the other rigors that he saw the saints had endured, not only was he consoled when he had these thoughts, but even after putting

them aside, he remained content and happy. He did not wonder, however, at this; nor did he stop to ponder the difference until one time his eyes were opened a little, and he began to marvel at the difference and to reflect upon it, realizing from experience that some thoughts left him sad and others happy. Little by little he came to recognize the difference between the spirits that agitated him, one from the demon, the other from God.

[9] From this reading he obtained not a little insight, and he began to think more earnestly about his past life and about the great need he had to do penance for it. At this point the desire to imitate the saints came to him, though he gave no thought to the circumstances, but only promised with God's grace to do as they had done. All he wanted to do was to go to Jerusalem as soon as he recovered, as mentioned above, performing all the disciplines and abstinences which a generous soul, inflamed by God, usually wants to do.

THE DECISION

[10] [...] But his brother and the rest of the household knew from his exterior the change that had been working inwardly in his soul.

[11] Without any cares he persevered in his reading and his good intentions, and he spent all his time in conversation with members of the household, speaking about the things of God. In so doing he benefited their souls.

Taking great pleasure in those books, the idea came to him to excerpt in brief some of the more essential things from the life of Christ and the saints; so with great diligence (because he was now beginning to be up and about the house a bit) he set himself to write a book in a good hand (because he was a very fine penman), using red ink for the words of Christ, blue ink for those of Our Lady, and polished and lined paper. Part of his time was spent in writing and part in prayer. The greatest consolation he received was to look at the sky and the stars, which he often did and for a long time, because as a result he felt within himself a very great desire to serve Our Lord. He often thought about his intention and wished to be healed completely now so he could take the road.

[12] Considering what he would do after he returned from Jerusalem, he decided to ask to enter the Carthusian house in Seville so he could always live as a penitent; nor would he say who he was so they would hold him in scant esteem, and there he would eat nothing but herbs. [...] Because he was wholly absorbed in the journey he was planning soon to make and because that matter did not have to be dealt with until his return, he stopped thinking about it so much. [...]

[13] And so he set out riding on a mule. On the road he persuaded his other brother who wanted to accompany him as far as Oñate to keep a vigil with him at Our Lady of Aranzazu. That night he prayed there for new strength for his journey. [...]

[16] [...] Coming to a large town before Montserrat, he wanted to buy there the clothing he had decided to wear when he went to Jerusalem. He bought cloth from which sacks were usually made, loosely woven and very prickly. Then he ordered a long garment reaching to his feet to be made from it. He bought a pilgrim's staff and a small gourd and put everything up front on the mule's saddle.

[17] He went on his way to Montserrat, thinking as always about the deeds he would do for the love of God. As his mind was full of ideas from

Amadis of Gaul and such books, some things similar to those came to mind. Thus he decided to watch over his arms all one night, without sitting down or going to bed, but standing a while and kneeling a while, before the altar of Our Lady of Montserrat where he had resolved to leave his clothing and dress himself in the armour of Christ. Leaving this place then he went on, thinking as usual about his intentions. After arriving at Montserrat, he said a prayer and arranged for a confessor. He made a general confession in writing that lasted three days. He arranged with the confessor to take his mule and to place his sword and his dagger in the church on the altar of Our Lady. This was the first man to whom he revealed his decision, because until then he had not revealed it to any confessor.

[18] On the eve of the feast of Our Lady in March [the Annunciation] in the year 1522, he went at night as secretly as he could to a poor man, and stripping off all his garments he gave them to the poor man and dressed himself in his desired clothing and went to kneel before the altar of Our Lady. At times in this way, at other times standing, with his pilgrim's staff in his hand he spent the whole night. He left at daybreak so as not to be recognized. He did not take the road that led straight to Barcelona, where he would encounter many who would recognize and honour him, but he went off to a town called Manresa. There he decided to stay in a hospice a few days and also to note some things in his book that he carefully carried with him and by which he was greatly consoled. [...]

THE EXPERIENCE OF SPIRITUAL COMBAT (MANRESA)

[20] Until this time he had remained always in nearly the same interior state of great and steady happiness, without having any knowledge of the inward things of the spirit. During those days while the vision lasted or somewhat before it began (for it lasted many days), a harsh thought came to trouble him by pointing out the hardship of his life, as if some one was saying within his soul, "How will you be able to endure this life for the seventy years you have yet to live?" Believing that the thought came from the enemy, he answered inwardly with great vehemence, "O miserable being! Can you promise me an hour of life?" So he overcame the temptation and remained at peace. This was the first temptation that came to him after the affair mentioned above. It happened when he was entering a church where he heard solemn mass each day and Vespers and Compline which were sung entirely and gave him great consolation. Usually he read the passion at mass, always retaining his equanimity.

[21] But soon after the temptation noted above he began to experience great changes in his soul. Sometimes he found himself so disagreeable that he took no joy in prayer or in hearing mass or in any other prayer he said. At other times exactly the opposite of this came over him so suddenly that he seemed to have thrown off sadness and desolation just as one snatches a cape from another's shoulders. Here he began to be astounded by these changes that he had never experienced before, and he said to himself, "What new life is this that we are now beginning?"

Iñigo left Manresa in mid-February 1523 in order to pursue his project of going to Jerusalem. Barcelona, Gaeta, Rome, Venice and Cyprus proved to be difficult stops on the way that leads to Mount Zion. Nevertheless, along the road, he exercised himself – according to his desire – in placing his faith and hope solely in God, and hence experienced Christ's consoling presence.

THE JOURNEY TOWARDS JERUSALEM

[42] When they arrived at Venice, the guards came to the boat to examine everyone, one by one, as many as there were, but they left him alone. He sustained himself in Venice by begging, and he slept in St. Mark's square. He had no wish to go to the house of the emperor's ambassador, nor did he take any special care to seek the wherewithal for his passage. He had a great certainty in his soul that God would give him the means to go to Jerusalem; this strengthened him so much that no arguments or fears suggested to him could cause him to doubt. One day he met a rich Spaniard who asked him what he was doing and where he wanted to go. Learning his purpose, he took him home to eat and kept him there a few days until his departure was arranged. Ever since Manresa the pilgrim had the habit when he ate with anyone not to speak at the table except to answer briefly; but he listened to what was said and noted some things that he took as the occasion to speak about God, and when the meal was finished, he did so.

[44] [...] This occurred to him after they left Cyprus until they arrived at Jaffa. They were journeying to Jerusalem on little donkeys, as was the custom. [...]

[45] [...] His firm intention was to remain in Jerusalem continually visiting the holy places, and, in addition to this devotion, he also planned to help souls. For this reason he brought letters of recommendation for the guardian and gave them to him. He also told him of his intention to remain there because of his devotion but not the second part about his wish to help souls, because he had not told this to anyone, though he had frequently spoken about the first part. The guardian answered that he did not see how he could stay because the house was in such need that it could not support the friars; for that reason he had decided to send some back to these parts [that is, Europe] with the pilgrims. The pilgrim replied that he wanted nothing from the house, except only that when he came at times to confess, they would hear his confession. With that the guardian told him that he could do that but that he would have to wait until the provincial (I believe he was the head of the order in that area), who was at Bethlehem, returned.

[46] [...] The provincial told him kindly that he knew of his good intention to remain in the holy places and he had given much thought to the matter, but because of the experience he had had with others, he decided that it would not be wise. Many had had that desire, but some had been captured

and others killed and the order had later been obliged to ransom the captives. Therefore he should prepare to leave the next day with the pilgrims.

He replied that he was very firm in his purpose and had resolved that he would not fail to carry it out for any reason. He frankly gave the provincial to understand that, even though he did not approve, he would not abandon his intention out of any fear, unless it was a matter on which he could compel him under pain of sin. To this the provincial replied that they had authority from the Apostolic See to compel anyone whom they wished to leave or to remain there and to excommunicate anyone who did not wish to obey them and that in this matter they were determined that he should not remain, and so forth.

[47] He wanted to show him the bulls giving them power to excommunicate, but he said he didn't need to see them, as he believed their reverences; inasmuch as they had decided with the authority they had, he would obey them.

[50] [...] After the pilgrim realized that it was not God's will that he remain in Jerusalem, he continually pondered within himself what he ought to do. At last he inclined more to study for some time so he would be able to help souls, and he decided to go to Barcelona. [...]

THE PERIOD OF STUDIES

Ignatius remained in Barcelona for more than two years so as to learn grammar, then he studied humanities for a year and a half in Alcalá. He also spent a couple of troublesome weeks in Salamanca. During these eventful sojourns, Ignatius exercised himself in teaching catechism. Because of this activity, he ended up in jail. Truly, how could one teach without having sustained a reasonably long period of studies? Ignatius was thus put on trial various times, until the sentence pronounced on the 2nd August 1527 in Salamanca.

[70] After twenty-two days of imprisonment, they were summoned to hear the sentence, which was that no error was found in their life or teaching. Therefore they could do what they had been doing, teaching doctrine and speaking about the things of God, so long as they never defined that 'this is a mortal sin or this is a venial sin, until they had studied for four more years. After the sentence was read, the judges displayed great kindness, because they wanted it to be accepted.

The pilgrim said that he would do everything the sentence ordered, but that he would not accept it, because, without condemning him for anything, they closed his mouth so that he could not help his neighbours insofar as he was able. Although Doctor Frias urged him and showed that he was very benevolent, the pilgrim said no more except that, as long as he was in the jurisdiction of Salamanca, he would do what had been ordered. Then they were released from jail, and he began to commend himself to God and to think about what he ought to do. He found great difficulty in remaining in Salamanca, for in the matter of helping souls it seemed that the door had been closed by this prohibition not to define mortal and venial sin.

[71] So he decided to go to Paris to study. [...]

[73] So he set out for Paris, alone and on foot. He reached Paris in the month of February more or less, and, as he told me, it was in the year 1528 or 1527.

He lodged in a house with some Spaniards and went to study humanities at Montaigu. The reason was that they had made him advance with so much haste in his studies that he was found to be very deficient in fundamentals. He studied with young boys, following the order and method of Paris. [...]

[74] He was received in the hospice of St. Jacques, beyond the [church of the] Innocents. It was very inconvenient for study because the

hospice was a good distance from the college of Montaigu, and in order to find the door open it was necessary to return at the sound of the Ave Maria and to leave at daybreak. Thus he could not attend very well at his lessons. Having to seek alms to support himself was another difficulty. Almost five years had passed now since he had had stomach pains, so he began to subject himself to greater penances and abstinences. Spending some time in this life at the hospice and begging and seeing that he was making little progress in his studies, he began to wonder what he should do. Seeing that there were some who served some of the regents in the colleges and had time to study, he decided to seek a master.

[76] At last, having found no solution, a Spanish friar told him one day that it would be better for him to go each year to Flanders and spend two months or even less, in order to obtain the wherewithal so he could study the whole year. After commending this idea to God, it seemed good to him. Following this advice, each year he brought back from Flanders the means to sustain himself in some way. Once he went over to England and got more alms than he used to get in other years. [...]

In Paris Ignatius gathered around him other students. Little by little they built up a small community, which would eventually become the Society of Jesus. Having decided to depart to Jerusalem after having finished their studies, the companions met in Venice in the first weeks of 1527. Since there was no possibility of travelling to Jerusalem, they divided themselves in small groups and dedicated themselves to the service of the poor, to prayer and to preaching.

TOWARDS ROME

[93] [...] The companions returned to Venice [from Rome] in the same way they had gone, that is, on foot and begging but divided into three groups and in such a way that they were always of different nations. In Venice those who were not ordained were there ordained for mass [...].

[94] In that year no ships sailed for the East because the Venetians had broken with the Turks. So, seeing that their hope of sailing was far off, they dispersed throughout the Venetian territory, with the intention of waiting the year they had agreed upon; after it was finished, if there was no passage, they would go to Rome. It fell to the pilgrim to go with Faber and Laínez to Vicenza. There they found a certain house outside the city, which had neither doors nor windows. They stayed in it, sleeping on a little bit of straw that they had brought. Two of them always went out to seek alms in the city twice a day, but they got so little they could hardly sustain themselves. They usually ate a little toasted bread when they had it, and the one who remained at home took care to toast it. In this way they spent forty days, not attending to anything other than prayer.

[95] After the forty days Master Jean Codure arrived, and all four decided to begin to preach. All four went to different piazzas and began to preach [...].

[96] At last, at the end of the year, as they had not found passage, they decided to go to Rome, even the pilgrim [...]. Divided into three or four groups, the pilgrim with Faber and Laínez, they went to Rome. On this journey he was visited very specially by God.

After he became a priest he had decided to spend a year without saying mass, preparing himself and begging Our Lady to deign to place him with her Son. One day, while still a few miles from Rome, he was praying in a church and experienced such a change in his soul and saw so clearly that God the Father had placed him with His Son Christ that his mind could not doubt that God the Father had indeed placed him with His Son.

[97] After arriving at Rome he told the companions that he saw that the windows were closed, meaning that they would have to meet many contradictions. [...]

In 1538, the companions arrived in Rome and dedicated themselves to the service of the Pope according to their vow. It is here that Ignatius Loyola dwelled until his death in 1556, he who referred to himself as “the Pilgrim”. Totally given to the service of the Church, Ignatius guided the “Society of Jesus” and sent it to “help souls” throughout the entire world.