

# SHARING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

## *St. Ignatius of Loyola & Discernment*

This month our Saint is St. Ignatius of Loyola and our virtue is Discernment. Discernment means taking time to think and pray about what we're supposed to do, asking for God's help to know the adventure He has in store for us and to seek what will truly make us happy.



### IN DEPTH

**Discernment** means taking time to pray and think about the choices in our lives. It's about asking God to help us understand what He wants us to do—and trusting that His plan will lead us to true happiness.

**St. Ignatius of Loyola** didn't always follow God's plan. As a young man, **he dreamed of fame and fortune** as a soldier. But everything changed when he was hit by a cannonball in battle –shattering his leg. While recovering, Ignatius began to read about the lives of the saints and the life of Jesus. That's when he started to notice something important: thinking about worldly success left him feeling empty, but imagining a life lived for God filled him with peace and joy.

Through prayer and reflection, Ignatius began to discern God's call. He gave up his old dreams and followed Jesus on a new adventure. He even helped others learn how to listen for God's voice through the Spiritual Exercises he created.

Like St. Ignatius, we can practice discernment by asking God to guide our thoughts, choices, and dreams. God has a beautiful plan for each of us—and He'll help us discover it, one prayer at a time.

### OTHER RESOURCES

- Saints Alive Podcast: [St. Ignatius of Loyola](#)
- Painting of St. Ignatius of Loyola ([Wikicommons](#))
- Facts about St. Ignatius of Loyola ([Loyola Press](#))

# TIPS FOR GROWING AS A FAMILY

## Begin and End the Day with God

- Make an effort to start the day together with the Lord through a short family prayer, asking for God's guidance and openness to His will throughout the day, such as "Lord, help us listen to You today and follow where You lead." At the end of the day, practice a short evening examen by taking 5–10 minutes together to reflect on the day with simple questions like: What are we thankful for today? When did we feel close to God? When did we feel far from Him? What might God be inviting us to do tomorrow?

## Discuss Decisions Together Prayerfully

- When faced with a choice (e.g., moving, school choices, volunteering, vacation planning), pause as a family to pray about it. Invite each person to share their thoughts, feelings, and what they sense God might be saying. Ask yourselves: Does this bring us peace? Does it lead us closer to God or away? Even if the decision only affects one family member, God may use the others to help communicate His plan for his/her happiness.

## Name and Notice Consolation and Desolation

- Teach children (and remind adults!) to notice consolation (moments of joy, peace, connection, and love) and desolation (moments of stress, anger, selfishness, or disconnection). Use these experiences to talk about what choices, people, or habits draw your family closer to or further from God. Remember that not all good ideas are from God, and that not all the good things God wants for us are easy.

## Cultivate "Holy Indifference" as a Family

- Talk openly about letting go of control and being open to God's surprises. Children pay attention and learn well when parents are open and honest about these difficulties that they also struggle with. An example of this could be, "We're hoping to get X, but if that's not what God wants for us, we trust He'll show us something better and we will follow His will." To foster this attitude, make an effort to choose and encourage service and sacrifice—even when it's inconvenient—as a way of saying yes to God.

## Build in Family Silence and Reflection

- Create small moments of silence before meals, during prayer time, or on car rides. This helps everyone learn how to listen—not just speak—to God. Even a short 1-minute pause can train the heart to be more attentive and still. After this minute, invite everyone to reflect on what God wants in that moment with questions like: How can we make this moment holy? How can we love better? What is giving us peace or anxiety right now? How can we seek what is true, good, and beautiful right now?