

# SHARING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

## *St. Ignatius of Loyola & Discernment*

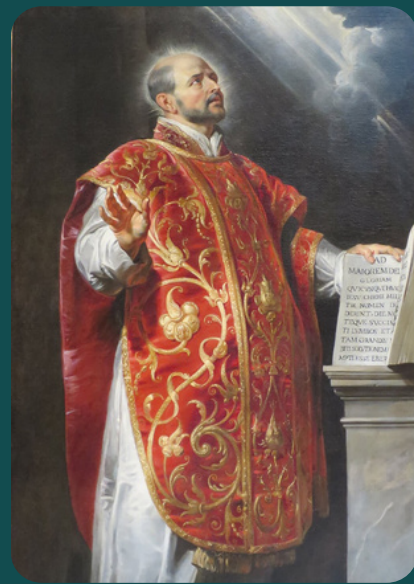
Discernment means taking time to think and pray about what we're supposed to do, asking for God's help to know the adventure He has in store for us and to seek what will truly make us happy.

### IN DEPTH FOR STUDENTS

God has a unique adventure planned for each of us, and He wants us to be filled with His infinite joy! (Jn 15:11) This doesn't mean nothing bad will ever happen, but that He will give us joy even when bad things happen. Because He wants us to be happy, God speaks to us all the time to help us follow the path He has made for us through our thoughts, feelings, lives, and through other people. However, not all of our thoughts and feelings are true, good, or from God, which is why we can't always just do what we feel or think will make us happy. We get attached to things that make us feel happy for a little bit of time (sweets, video games, sins like gossip, teasing, disobedience, etc.), and these can pull us away from what will make us happy forever. To be free to be truly happy, we need to ask for God's help to know what He wants for us. Paying attention to our thoughts and feelings and asking God for help understanding them is part of discernment. Discernment is being mindful of God and His will for us at all times and trying to follow His plan so that we can have the joy He desires for us. This is hard to do, but a good rule to follow is that things from God will feel peaceful, even if they seem scary, while things that are not from God will feel uneasy, even if they seem simple.

### CONNECTION TO THE SAINT

St. Ignatius of Loyola lived a life of doing what he wanted while seeking power and glory, which he believed would make him happy. This was until he was injured in battle and had to spend a lot of time recovering. While stuck in bed, realizing his dreams could not happen anymore, he read about the lives of the saints and was inspired to become a great saint as well! From that day on, he tried to pay attention to God's voice in his life and to follow God's will, even when it wasn't what he wanted to do. His new motto became, "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" ("For the greater glory of God"). By following God's will, he went from being a soldier wanting glory to being the founder of the Jesuit order that has lasted almost 500 years! We also still study his great works on prayer and discernment today. God's will for him was greater and more joyous than he could have ever imagined for himself, and the same is true for you!



## OTHER RESOURCES;

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

## PRACTICAL CLASSROOM IDEAS

- **Discernment Journal** - Encourage students to keep a simple journal where they reflect on daily or weekly decisions. Prompt them with questions like:
  - “What decision did I need to make today?”
  - “How did I ask God for help?”
  - “What brought me peace or joy?”
- **Cannonball Moments Reflection** - Have students reflect on the idea of a “cannonball moment” in their own lives—an unexpected event that changed their perspective or made them think more deeply about God’s plan. They can write about or draw this moment and share (if they’re comfortable) in small groups.
- **God’s Adventure for Me Posters** - Invite students to create posters that show the kind of adventure they believe God might be calling them to. It could include their gifts, dreams, or ways they want to help others. Include quotes from St. Ignatius like, “Go forth and set the world on fire.”
- **Daily Ignatian Prayer Prompt** - Begin each day or class with a brief prayer or reflection inspired by the Daily Examen from St. Ignatius. For example:
  - “Where did I feel close to God today?”
  - “What decision do I need to pray about?”
- **What Would You Choose? Scenarios** - Read aloud short scenarios where a student must make a decision—some simple, some more meaningful—and ask students to brainstorm how they could use discernment. Follow up with a prayer asking God for wisdom and peace in decision-making.