

## 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2025 C

*What were you doing three years ago today?* Unless something exceptional happened, most of us don't recall even three months ago. But every experience shapes us, even if we have no clear recollection of it. Research into our brains suggests that when we remember something, we do not simply play the same tape, over and over. ***Rather, every remembrance and every choice creates a new memory path, so that what we think about and what we do most often becomes most enduring in our minds ... a larger storehouse of connections in our brains so that by sheer volume, these things remain longer in our minds.*** What we most often allow into our lives shapes our character and personality – the kind of fruit we are likely to bear, as Jesus puts it.

If he had lived in our day, Inigo Lopez would have been a high-school junior when he became a soldier for hire in his native Spain. Wealthy, skilled with the sword, and with a strong sense of entitlement, he sought fame and glory and felt invincible. Just a year later, his leg was shattered by a stray cannonball. He returned to the family castle, his military career over at age 18. During his long recovery, the few books of adventure his friends brought were soon exhausted. Bored, he turned to the only other reading available – the Bible and the lives of the saints. Gradually, he realized that while he enjoyed reading those tales of war, they left no lasting happiness; they thrilled him in the moment but left him empty. Yet reading about the saints stayed with him and called forth his better nature. ***To pursue the things of God – slowly, he came to think of this as the far greater challenge, with the promise of a glory that would not fade away.***

You perhaps recognize by now that Inigo is better known to us as St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Those months of forced bedrest bore fruit in one of his best-known prayers: ***“Take, Lord, receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my entire will. All that I am, and all that I possess, You have given to me. I surrender it all to you to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and I will desire nothing more.”***

It's easy to say and inspiring to ponder, but it becomes real only with daily choices to align the deeds we do and the words we say to the mind of Jesus, and not seek our glory in things that seem important in the moment but soon pass away.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century world of St. Ignatius did not have cell phones. There was no Internet, no 24/7 news cycle, no bloggers or apps. Yet then as now, many voices call us to follow, to give our allegiance to this or that idea or cause or purpose. ***We each choose our teachers, the people we allow to form our attitudes and habits. Often in our day, they are people we have never met except by something we've found online.*** Those voices often appeal to our self-interest, advantage, and ease. ***In contrast, Jesus teaches us to carry whatever Cross He sends us with love, to serve with mercy, to trust with patience.*** As his disciples, we know at times that we will fail. But when fully trained, even through those failures, we will become like Him. That means in part that we will have some scars earned through sacrifices we have made for another. To those of you who do this so faithfully, quietly, and humbly ... thank you.

At the heart of the Eucharist are the words of Jesus: "Do this in memory of Me." As He comes to you today, speak your Amen as an invitation: ***Jesus, my Teacher, give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and I will desire nothing more. Today, make me more like You.***