



The Hidden Treasure of Ignatian Spirituality

SLIDE 1

Good evening

I was out with friends recently and the conversation turned to movies and in particular, blockbuster movies such as Indiana Jones and his larger than life adventures, and the *National Treasure* series. Searching for hidden treasure is a common theme in legend and fiction, and blockbuster movies, but real-life treasure hunters do exist.

Spanish treasure lost from the Spanish fleet consisted of gold, silver, jewels and also cocoa, vanilla and Brazil wood. Tonight/today I am going to take you on a hunt for Spanish treasure but you will not have to crack whips like Harrison Ford or wear a funny hat. The treasure we are going to find is Ignatian spirituality and we will find this treasure through Christian Life Community.

SLIDE 2

So what exactly is Christian Life Community?

We are an international lay organisation, within the Catholic Church, practising Ignatian spirituality. Members gather together in small groups which usually meet together fortnightly.

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It all goes back to 1540 when the Jesuits were initially formed by St Ignatius. During his life time, various lay groups gathered around the early Jesuits. After his death, some of these groups were formed into the Marian Congregation aimed at forming lay people in the spirituality of St Ignatius. The name was the Marian Congregation. The name was changed to Christian Life Community (CLC) in 1968. CLC has a close relationship the Jesuits.

And now we are being represented at the United Nations.

SLIDE 4 & 5

And who is this Ignatius whose life and actions still influence us today?

Ignatius was a minor nobleman, born Inigo Lopez in 1491 in the family castle of Loyola in the Basque region of northern Spain. He was the youngest of thirteen children and at the age of fourteen, he was sent away to train as a royal page to the king of Spain. There he was introduced to ideals of chivalry and knightly valour. In his autobiography he sums up the first twenty-six years of his life in one sentence: "he was a man given to the follies of the world; and what he enjoyed most was warlike sport, with a great and foolish desire to win fame." The desire to win fame brought Ignatius to Pamplona to aid in the defence of that frontier city against French attack. On May 20, 1521, he was hit by a cannon ball which shattered one leg and badly injured the other. Ignatius and the city of Pamplona both fell to the French forces.

French doctors cared for the badly-wounded Ignatius and returned him to Loyola, where he spent a long convalescence. In this forced period of inactivity he asked for books to read and, out of boredom, accepted the only ones available - *The Lives of the Saints* and *The Life of Christ* (probably not the usual kind of reading matter for a twenty-six old man fond of the follies of the world). When not reading, the romantic knight dreamed at some times of imitating the deeds of St Francis and St Dominic, and at others, of knightly deeds of valour in service of "a certain lady".

After a time, he came to realise that some things left him dry and dissatisfied, while other things were life-giving. His eyes were opened and he began to marvel at the difference and to reflect upon it. Little by little he came to recognise the difference between the good and bad spirits that were stirring within. Ignatius was discovering God at work in his life; his desire for fame was transformed into a desire to dedicate himself completely to following Christ and "helping others".

For all the depth of this desire, it took Ignatius many years of exploration before discerning how God wanted him to live it out. Eventually he gathered companions around himself and formed the Society of Jesus, which was established in 1540.

His road to sainthood was not easy, but despite this he became St Ignatius in 1622.

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So, what is Ignatian spirituality and how can it help me the way it helped Ignatius – to grow close to God and help me serve others?"

It provides me with all of these and more.

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... but wait, there's more!

We all benefit in different ways from being part of CLC. We pray together, we socialise and we form close friendships in the service of God.

CLC for me is the opportunity to meet with close and loving friends who share and challenge my values and my beliefs. It is being supported in my search to know God more deeply. It is about: discovering who I really am; directing myself toward God;

noticing God's action in my life; connecting my lived experience with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; It helps me to grow, like Ignatius, who dedicated himself completely to following Christ and "helping others".

SLIDE 8

The essence of Ignatian spirituality is finding God in the everyday-in the midst of our lives as we live them, in our employment or unemployment, in our homes and mortgages, our family, our children, and the routine of daily life. Or standing here talking to all of you.

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The way I have discovered these blessings is by being part of the World Christian Life Community. You are invited to consider becoming a member of the World Christian Life Community.

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To use current jargon: "What's in it for me?"

On a personal basis, membership of CLC provides me with all these.

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It's a gradual process so that you can taste and see whether CLC is for you. You are invited to attend some meetings. The process happens over a period of 6 months at which point you can then decide whether you wish to join.

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Once a member, you will be welcomed into the Christian Life Community family.

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The CLC brochure I am handing you has the contact's details on the back. Give him/her a call and you've taken the first step to enriching your life.