

## All My Liberty

### Appendix II: Apostolic Constitution of Pius XI Declaring St. Ignatius Patron of All Spiritual Exercises

*Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.*

It has always been the chief concern of the Sovereign Pontiffs to commend, and highly to praise, to promote, and strongly to encourage, all that notably makes for the goodness and perfection of Christian life. Now a place in the front rank of all that helps towards this end has been won by those Spiritual Exercises which St. Ignatius, by a certain divine instinct, introduced into the Church. For although, in the goodness and mercy of God, men have never been wanting to set forth aptly deep thoughts upon heavenly things before the eyes of the faithful, yet Ignatius was the first to begin to teach a certain system and special method of going through spiritual retreats. He did this in the little book which he wrote when he was still a quite uneducated man, and to which he himself gave the name "Spiritual Exercises." This method was such as wonderfully to help the faithful to hate sin, and to plan out their life holily after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To the power of the Ignatian method is due the fact that, as Our eminent Predecessor Leo XIII avowed, the high value of these Exercises has been proved by the experience of the last three centuries and by the witness of all who during that time gave evidence of the highest form of ascetical training and holiness of life. Along with the many shining examples of holiness actually found in the household of St. Ignatius itself, who expressly declare that it is from the Exercises, as its source, that they have drawn their whole plan of asceticism, we love also to recall, from among

the secular clergy, those two lights of the Church, St. Francis of Sales and St. Charles Borromeo. Francis, when seeking duly to prepare himself for episcopal consecration, carefully retired in order to make the Ignatian Exercises, and during them mapped out for himself that plan of life, to which he afterwards remained always faithful, according to the principles for the "Reformation of Life." Contained in St. Ignatius' little book. Charles Borromeo, as Our Predecessor of happy memory, Pius X, has shown, and as We Ourselves have proved in historical papers published before We were raised to the Supreme Pontificate, having experienced the value of the Exercises in his own person and being led by them to adopt a more perfect form of life, went on to spread their use abroad among clergy and laity alike. Among holy men and women belonging to religious bodies, it will be enough to quote, for example, that mistress of lofty contemplation, Teresa, and Leonard of Port Maurice, the son of the Seraphic Patriarch, who rated St. Ignatius' book so highly that he owned he wholly followed its plan when winning souls to God.

Accordingly this book – so small in bulk, yet so marvelous – from its first edition has been solemnly approved by the Roman Pontiffs. They have praised it most highly, have sanctioned it by their Apostolic Authority, and have constantly urged men to use it by means of numerous indulgences and the recommendation of frequent encomiums.

We regard it as certain that most of the ills of our day start from the fact that "no one reflects in his heart." We deem it proved that the Spiritual Exercises, made according to the plan of St. Ignatius, have the greatest efficacy in dispelling the most stubborn difficulties with which human society is now confronted. We have studied the rich harvest of virtues that ripens today no less than of old in spiritual retreats, not only among members of religious congregations and the secular clergy, but also among the laity, and, what in our day is worthy of special and separate

remark, among the working classes themselves. Therefore, We earnestly wish that the making of these Spiritual Exercises should daily spread more widely. We also desire that retreat houses, where persons withdraw for a whole month, or for eight days, or for fewer, there to put themselves into training for the perfect Christian life, may come into being and flourish everywhere more numerously.

Copyright © 1998 Inter Mirifica

This in Our love for the Lord's flock We beg from God. And therefore, in answer to the earnest desires and petitions of the Sacred Hierarchy of both rites in practically the whole Catholic world, and also because We Ourselves are eager to give no doubtful sign of Our gratitude towards the Holy Patriarch at this time, particularly on the occasion of the third centenary of the canonization of St. Ignatius and the fourth centenary of the writing of this invaluable little book, following the example of Our Predecessors who have assigned patrons and guardians to various institutions, having called a council of Our Venerable Brethren, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Catholic Church who preside over the Congregation of Sacred Rites, We, by Our Apostolic Authority, declare, constitute and proclaim St. Ignatius of Loyola to be the Heavenly Patron of all Spiritual Exercises, and accordingly of all institutes, Sodalities, or groups of whatever sort, which bestow their care and zeal upon those who are making the Spiritual Exercises.

And We decree that these Our Letters are and ever will be firm, valid and efficacious, and that to them belong and shall accrue their proper, full and integral effects, notwithstanding anything whatsoever to the contrary.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, in the year of Our Lord 1922, the 25<sup>th</sup> day of July, the first of Our Pontificate.

**Pius P.P. XI**