



## Solemnity of St Ignatius of Loyola, Priest



**Date:** Thursday, July 31, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

**First Reading:** Jeremiah 20:7-9

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-11

**Second Reading:** 1 Corinthians 10:31-11

**Gospel Acclamation:** Matthew 5:3

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 14:25-33

**Preached at:** the Chapel of Richartz House in the Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

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**H**appy Feast day of our Founder, St Ignatius of Loyola, to you all.

There's a story many of us have heard—a Jesuit near the end of his life was asked quietly, "Are you afraid to meet Jesus?" And he answered, "Jesus? No, not at all. But Ignatius... that's another matter." It makes us smile because there's truth in it. We knew what Ignatius asked of us. He expected us to love Christ completely, without conditions. He once told his companions, "Go, and set the world on fire." Not with noise or pride—but with love that burns steady and deep, and keeps going even when our strength runs low.

That same fire speaks through the prophet Jeremiah today: "There seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. I grew weary of holding it in, and I could not." It wasn't a fire he asked for. It was given to him. It seized him. He tried to hold it back, but the love of God will not be contained—not in youth, not in old age, not even in weakness.

Ignatius knew that fire too. Wounded and lying still, unable to chase after the glory he once wanted, he found his heart restless—drawn not to the battlefield, but to the quiet figure of Christ. His old dreams gave way to something greater. And that letting go was not the end—it was the beginning. That surrender became the Spiritual Exercises, a path not just for the strong, but for all who are willing to say, "Take, Lord, receive..."

In the Gospel, Jesus says plainly: “Unless you give up everything, you cannot be my disciple.” He does not call us to comfort, but to freedom. And in Ignatian terms, as we all remember, that freedom is known as indifference—not indifference in the usual sense, but a spiritual openness to whatever draws us closer to God. It means being free not only to receive what God gives, but to receive it when and how He chooses. Whether it comes through strength or frailty, honour or obscurity, clarity or confusion—we trust it is love that sends it. And this, too, is our discipleship. For many of us, this surrender is no longer an idea. It is daily reality. We let go of what once defined us: our roles, our responsibilities, our sharpness—even our memories. And this is not failure. It is grace. It is the grace of the Third Week—to share in Christ’s Passion in our bodies and our limitations. And it is what leads us, gently, into the joy of the Fourth Week—a joy no longer rooted in what we do, but in the One to whom we belong.

Here we can remember Fr Pedro Arrupe. After a stroke left him unable to speak or move, he wrote: “More than ever I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life—from my youth. But now there is a difference: the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in God’s hands.”

Those words carry weight for us. As we grow older, there are things we can no longer do. Our hands no longer build schools or guide retreats. Our voices may no longer preach as they once did. But perhaps we are now in the very place Ignatius longed to reach: where the gift of self is no longer in action, but in surrender. In trust. In offering even our forgetfulness, our confusion, our rest.

The *Suscipe* is not a prayer of youth. It is the prayer of one who has come to know God well enough to give everything back—memory, understanding, will—and to trust that it is enough.

And Paul says to us today: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” Even now, even here—especially here—we can still live *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*. Our prayer for the Church, for the Society, for this struggling country of Zimbabwe, still matters deeply. We do not lead from pulpits or parishes, but from the quiet place of intercession, from the patient place of presence. God sees it. And God receives it.

So on this day, we give thanks. For the fire that first caught light in Loyola. For the many years we've carried that fire in our hearts. For the grace, even now, to offer everything to the One who has given us everything.

And like Ignatius, we are invited to end in prayer—not with many words, but with questions that still speak to the heart. Many of us have spent a lifetime reflecting on those profound questions our Founder posed: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ? These questions have shaped our discernment, our ministries, and our very lives as Jesuits.

But perhaps, at this unique and sacred stage of our journey, as we find ourselves more profoundly in God's hands, the Spirit invites us to a slightly different, yet equally deep, set of reflections. These are not replacements, but rather a gentle re-framing for hearts that are now called to a different kind of surrender and presence:

- How am I being invited to rest in God's love today?
- What grace have I received, that I now return with gratitude?
- What remains to be given, even now, into God's hands?

Amen.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.

