

Today is the Memorial of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Ignatius was born in 1491 - one year before Columbus sailed for the New World; and was the youngest of 13 children. He enjoyed the life "at court" - in other words, strutting around, going to parties, dancing, flirting, gambling, dueling ... in fact, due to a dispute between his family and another, he and his brothers ambushed some clergy from the other family. He managed to get the charges dropped.

In 1521, at a battle when the Spanish forces were greatly outnumbered, Ignatius convinced the commander not to surrender, but to fight for the honor of Spain. In that battle, a cannonball struck Ignatius ... wounding one leg and breaking the other. His courage so impressed the French that they took him to his family's castle to recuperate.

His leg didn't heal correctly, so the doctors broke it again to re-set it. It got worse, and he was told to prepare for death. On the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, Ignatius' health improved, and his leg eventually healed. But, one leg was shorter than the other, and a bone stuck out below his knee.

He was so vain, that he had the doctors saw off the protrusion, and attempt to systematically stretch the leg while it healed.

Remember - this was the 1500s ... and there wasn't any anesthesia.

During all this time in bed recovering, he was bored. But the only books in the house were a life of Christ and stories of the Saints. The more he read, the more he was attracted to live the life of a Saint.

In a sense, his chivalry for self-glory was transformed into a chivalry for the glory of God.

The rest, of course, is history.

In a sense, St. Ignatius gave up all that he had invested in for worldly glory to seek the treasures of heaven for the greater glory of God.

In all his trials, he found solace in uniting himself to Our Lord and the Saints.

May we, through the intercession of St. Ignatius, find our strength and our glory in the life of Jesus Christ ... and may this Eucharist which we will receive today, conform us day-by-day into the image of Christ ... through God's transforming grace.