

# Pray on the Way with Ignatius



## The Jerusalem Ball

In February 1522, Ignatius gets back on track. He travelled through Spain to Barcelona and went to the famous monastery of Montserrat, Catalonia. There he makes a 3 days retreat during which he's writing a general confession. He surrendered his sword and dagger to the Black Madonna. He spends the whole night of March 24-25 in prayer before Our Lady's altar...



Then he puts on a canvas tunic, takes a pilgrim's staff for the road and gives his nice clothes to a poor man. We can see here that



Ignatius is fundamentally remaining a knight, but the "conquistador" is gradually transforming into a "pilgrim"... with a desire to reach Jerusalem.

### In Manresa

Before embarking on his journey to Barcelona, Ignatius set aside for a few days in the city of Manresa to write down in his book his spiritual experience in order to help others...

Finally, **he did live a year of solitude, prayer and penitence in Manresa**. It was there that he began to write down his experience that would later become the book of the Spiritual Exercises, a booklet relating an experience, a relationship between two people, the "creature" aka the retreatant and his "creator", God. It has been a time of great consolation moments, interior visions (or illuminations) about the Holy Trinity, the creation, humanity, the Incarnation and the sciences, but also a time of heavy fighting **against the spirits** that gave him scruples, tried to discourage him, making him despair and to pull him down... almost to suicide.

Mid-February 1523 he's finally embarking from Barcelona for Italy and then to Jerusalem on March 20<sup>th</sup>, leaving all his money behind.

## In Jerusalem

Starting from Venice, Ignatius finally arrives in Jerusalem through Cyprus in September 1523. His dream has finally come true! He had only one desire: to stay in Jerusalem and constantly visit the Holy Places and to help souls. However, the Superior of the Franciscans who are guarding the Holy Places and accompanying the pilgrimages, forbids him to do so. In fact, the Turks were used to kidnap Christians, especially the richest ones, to obtain a ransom. Ignatius then tried to be cunning and to negotiate to stay. Ultimately, under the threat of being excommunicated, he had to leave the Holy Land within fifteen days.

One could say that this is the second cannonball which is pulverizing Ignatius' projects... **Threatened of being excommunicated, Ignatius is obedient, he complies and then wonders what to do... If he wants to help souls, he has to turn to studies. Here again, it is also a conversion: helping souls no longer passes through the sword but rather through knowledge, mediation of culture, right in the line of the Incarnation...**

But that is another story!

### Points of reflection...

- The conquistador becomes a pilgrim. What could I also lighten my load so that I can follow Christ more freely in my movements and thoughts?
- I write down a fruit of this prayer in my notebook and can leave a note on the spiritual wall of the retreat.

### I can leave a note on the spiritual wall of the retreat



## I prepare for this personal time of prayer:



- As I approach the place of prayer, I remember that I am going to spend a moment of intimacy with the Lord.
- I decide on a time for this prayer (15 minutes? 20 minutes?)
- I look for a space and a position that helps me to be present.
- I am silent, I turn off my mobile phone, I breathe slowly: my whole body calms down.
- I realise that I am entering the presence of the Lord. I look at him as he looks at me.
- After a sign of the cross, I ask the Holy Spirit to support me in listening to the Lord during the time of prayer. May everything that happens help me to find Jesus Christ, to know him better, to love him more and to follow him more closely.



### **BIBLICAL TEXT: ACTS 17.15, 22-34 AND 18.1**

#### **Introduction**

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Today, we will meditate on Paul's first encounter with the world of the Greek philosophers, and how out of failure can emerge life. At the beginning of this prayer time, I drop all my concerns before the Lord. May my whole being be entirely turned towards you, ô Lord, in order to meet You. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### **Bible passage reference**

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Today's reading is from Acts 17

## Point 1

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A failure doesn't stop Paul and the brothers: they leave for Athens, one of the great cultural centers of this time. Paul is going to the peripheries, as Pope Francis likes to say. Standing before the Wise Men, he takes their culture as starting point. What animates him? What drives him? What makes him stand up?

## Point 2

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"God created people in order for them to seek Him ... He is close to us ... and not in a golden statue ... He invites men to convert". I look at this Areopagus, I listen to Paul's words. How have they been heard? And what about me? What is striking me?

## Introduction to the second listening

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We listen again to the story of Paul's first encounter with the Greek philosophers.  
We are seeing how life is born out of failure.

## Invitation to personal prayer

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This Gospel has reached me, it has shaken me up, or even bothered me in this difficult encounter with someone else, someone different.

I welcome what this encounter made happen to me.

I turn to the Lord, the Risen Lord in this Easter time.

I speak to him, with all my heart, with a great simplicity.

## Final prayer

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(prayer) Ô Soul of Christ...

## At the end of the prayer

- I take a moment to look at the way it happened, to see if the setting was appropriate (place, time, duration etc.)
- I write down a fruit of the prayer in my notebook
- I can leave a note on the spiritual wall of the retreat

## I can leave a note on the spiritual wall of the retreat