

## Introduction to St. Ignatius Loyola:

### The Founder of the Jesuits

The Society of Jesus was founded by Ignatius Loyola and a small group of his classmates from the University of Paris in the year 1540—a period of transition between the late middle ages and the early Renaissance. It's not surprising, then, that a new and different type of religious order would form during this historic age of remarkable change.



The Society was one of the first non-monastic orders. To be certain, the early Jesuits were prayerful, but their praying directed them to go outward, to be active, to be with people in order to “help souls,” to be “contemplatives in action.” The Society was also the first order to form a world-wide network of schools and universities. These “firsts” grew out of the Society’s motto: *For the Greater Glory of God*.

The founding Jesuits did not initially plan for education to be their primary ministry. Yet at the time of Ignatius’ death, 35 schools had been formed and by the end of the 17th century there were 300. Almost a century after that, the first Jesuit college was established in the United States with the founding of Georgetown in 1789.

It's worth noting that the majority of Jesuit schools and colleges in this country were founded in large, emergent cities in order to minister to the most people in greatest need. Twenty-seven of the 59 U.S. and Canadian high schools opened their doors in the 1800s, reflecting the wave of Catholic immigration to America.

Father Peter Hans Kolvenbach S.J., former worldwide leader of the Jesuits, said that to truly understand Jesuit education we need to understand the world-view, vision and the life of Ignatius Loyola, now considered one of the greatest educators in the history of the world. As you read Ignatius’ biography, you’re invited to do something that Ignatius himself might have invited you to do, which is to notice your own thoughts, feelings, emotions and memories about *your life* as you journey through *his life*. This is a very Ignatian thing to do.



### Information

#### **[A Biography - St. Ignatius Loyola: The Founder of the Jesuits](#)**

George Traub, S.J. and Debra Mooney, Ph.D.

### Reflection Questions

- **What experiences in St. Ignatius’s early life helped him to be the leader that he was in the last 16 years of his life?**
- **What are some key events (i.e., circumstance, decision, coincidences) in my life that have led me to be the leader-trustee that I am today?**

- **What life circumstances, leadership qualities, and/or governance styles do I have in common with St. Ignatius?**
- **Why did I accept the invitation to serve on this board?**

[Return to Trustees home](#)