

JULY 31, 2021  
Memorial of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Priest  
Matthew 14: 1-12

“FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD.”

To die for truth and faith is a martyrs' life and witnessing. Today' gospel is undoubtedly giving of one's life for Christ as the Truth Himslef. John was a martyred in the hands of Herod Antipas by standing on the truth and professing what Jesus intended him to be: precursor and herald of Truth. “Herod Antipas ruled over Galilee and Perea from 4 BC to 39 AD, that is, all during the life of Jesus and beyond. He is the one who wanted to see Jesus and whom Jesus called “that fox.” He is the one to whom Pilate sent Jesus during his trial. Although only a tetrarch (meaning that he was the ruler of a fourth part or a quarter of a territory), Matthew calls him ‘king’ because that was his popular title among the Galileans and also in Rome. It seems that, by all accounts, Herod was a nasty man and, as revealed by today's story, a weak and highly superstitious one.”<sup>1</sup> John criticized him because of his relationship to Herodias, his half-brother Philip's wife which is a clear violation of the Mosaic Law, having a relationship to your brother's wife which Philip at that time is still living. “Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great and therefore a niece of Herod Antipas. First, she married another uncle, Herod Philip, who lived in Rome. He was a half-brother, from a different mother, of Herod Antipas. It was on a visit to Rome that Herod Antipas persuaded Herodias to leave her husband for him.”<sup>2</sup> Because of the criticism of John, Herodias really wanted him to be killed or get rid of him and it was on that party that she made it realized. Herod promised Herodias' daughter Salome after she was enticed by her dance to give even half of his kingdom. Herod compromised fairness, truth and justice from the pressure and weight of other's opinion and his personal benefits and interests. While John is an exemplar of integrity and truthfulness amidst danger and persecution, a prophet and spokespersons for God's way

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<sup>1</sup> livingspace.sacredspace.ie

<sup>2</sup> ibid

and truth which is not always simple and easy. John the Baptist died for the truth and in the service of God.

Today we are also celebrating the memorial of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, a religious group of men serving other for the greater glory of God. "Inigo, as he was called before, was the youngest of thirteen children. His mother died when he was just seven. He became a soldier at the age of 18. In 1521, while defending the town of Pamplona against French attack, Ignatius was struck by a cannonball in the legs. To save his life and possibly his legs, doctors performed several surgeries. There were no anesthetics during this time, so each surgery was painful. On June 29, 1521, on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Ignatius began to improve. During this time of bodily improvement, Ignatius began to read lives of the saints and Christ. One story in particular influenced him, "De Vita Christi" (The life of Christ). The story offers commentary on the life of Christ and suggested a spiritual exercise that required visualizing oneself in the presence of Christ during the episodes of His life. The book would inspire Ignatius' own spiritual exercises. As he lay bedridden, Ignatius developed a desire to become a working servant of Christ. He especially wanted to convert non-Christians. His time in prayer and contemplation helped him to understand himself better. He also gained a better understanding of God and God's plan for him. He suffered from doubts, anxiety and depression. But he also recognized that these were not from God. Ignatius realized he needed to obtain a complete education if he wanted to convert people. He was 38 years old when he entered the College of Saint Barbe of the University of Paris. He earned a master's degree at the age of 44. While at school in Paris, Ignatius roomed with Peter Faber and Francis Xavier. The men became friends and Ignatius led them in his spiritual exercises. Other men soon joined their exercises and became followers of Ignatius. The group began to refer to themselves as "Friends in the Lord," an apt description. Ignatius imposed a strict, almost military rule on his order. This was natural for a man who spent his youth as a soldier. It might be expected that such rigor would dissuade people from

joining, but it had the opposite effect. The order grew. Ignatius' passed away on July 31, 1556, at the age of 64. He was beatified by Pope Paul V on July 27, 1609 and canonized on March 12, 1622.”<sup>3</sup>

When I was in the seminary St. Ignatius was the second saint I read about, was fascinated by his life, and the one who had a great influence in my priesthood. I was inspired by his life because despite of his weaknesses and sinfulness, he was not discouraged to offer himself to God.

My sisters and brothers, St. John the Baptist and St. Ignatius of Loyola stand for the truth, gave up their lives for God and for the service of others. So, let us imitate them by living honest life, always truthful and just in every aspect of our lives. Let us not compromise the truth, with what we knew was the good and right thing to do and took the line of less challenges, battle or resistance. Let us be firm to follow the Lord amidst difficulties and opposition from others, and prophets of truth and justice.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)