

Vita beati P. Ignatii Loiolae Societatis Iesu fundatoris.

(The Life of St. Ignatius Loyola, Founder of the Society of Jesus)

Rome, 1609

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The Vita beati P. Ignatii Loiolae Societatis Iesu fundatoris (Life of the Blessed Father Ignatius Loyola, Founder of the Society of Jesus) was published in Rome in 1609 on the occasion of Ignatius's beatification. This book contains the first elaborate cycle illustrating the life of the founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits): seventy-nine copper engravings depict scenes from Ignatius's life, beginning with his birth in 1491 and including his conversion at the castle of Loyola, his retirement to Manresa, his journey to the Holy Land, and so forth until his death in 1556.

The fact that the *Vita* was published the very year of Ignatius's beatification means that it was in preparation long before that and was part of the Jesuits' strategy to make vivid Ignatius's holiness and to place him in the public eye as an important holy man, worthy of being declared a saint. Although the *Vita* was published in Rome, the engravings were executed by the Galle workshop in Antwerp (Belgium) and were the work of Flemish artists, including Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), who indisputably designed at least one (*Ignatius Presents the Students of the Collegio Germanico to Pope Julius III*, fol. 64) and probably more of the prints. Some scholars believe that Rubens may have been even more closely involved in the project.

In terms of global distribution, this illustrated volume of Ignatius's life is equaled in importance only by Jerome Nadal's *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia* (Annotations and Meditations on the Gospels) (first and second editions, 1595; third edition, 1607). (In this connection, Saint Joseph's University Press is publishing a three-volume English translation of the most important parts of Nadal's work. Vol. 1, *The Infancy Narratives*, was published in

2004, and Vol. III, *The Resurrection Narratives*, in 2005. Vol. II, *The Passion Narratives*, will follow in 2006. Nadal's Latin text is rendered, for the first time ever, in English translation by Fr. Frederick A. Homann, S.J., formerly professor of mathematics at SJU. The translated text is preceded in each volume by an introductory study by Dr. Walter S. Melion, who is Asa Griggs Chandler Professor of Art History at Emory University. In Vol. 1, Professor Melion's study considers "The Art of Vision in Jerome Nadal's *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia*," while his essay in Vol. 3 studies "The Image of the Glorified Christ in Jerome Nadal's *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia*.")

The *Vita*'s engravings were often used later as models for subsequent images of Ignatius produced by painters and sculptors from Peru to China. It is notable that the engravings include various types of face for their representation of Ignatius. For example, in engravings 3-35, he has a face that is elongated with sunken cheeks and a short goatee, whereas later in the book, he is shown as clean-shaven.

Also noteworthy in this series is that Ignatius begins to be depicted as a priest—standing before an altar, wearing a chasuble, and celebrating Mass. The first such depiction was by Rubens in 1608; it was quoted by him again and again in later paintings and copies and adapted by other artists. Ignatius in chasuble would henceforth become an integral part of Jesuit iconography, a development not altogether unrelated to the insistence of the Council of Trent (1545-63) that Holy Orders was an authentic sacrament instituted by Christ, a belief denied by the Protestants. Ignatius in chasuble is Ignatius as orthodox.



Title page of the volume



Frontispiece



Birth of St. Ignatius



In lecto decumbens, dum ad recreandum
animum Christi domini vitam et exem-
pla Sanctorum euoluit, diuinarum virtutum
imitatione exardescens, ad Deum conuertitur.

4

The conversion of Ignatius



Ignatij in Septemtrionis res apprime intenti
studio, ac precibus Iulius III. Pont. Max. collegium
Germaniae iuuentutis non minori Ecclesiae Romanae
ornamento, quam Germania praesidio Romae condit.

64

*Ignatius presents the students of
Collegio Germanico to Pope Julius III*



Romae sanctissime moritur, eodemque
puncto temporis beata eius anima ingenti
splendore conspicua, Bononia a nobili,
sanctaq; foemina ferri in caelum aspicitur.

77

The death of Ignatius