July 31st: Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Priest

Gospel text (*Lk* 14:25-33): One day, when large crowds were walking along with Jesus, He turned and said to them, «If you come to me, without being ready to give up your love for your father and mother, your spouse and children, your brothers and sisters, and indeed yourself, you cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not follow me carrying his own cross cannot be my disciple.

»Do you build a house without first sitting down to count the cost to see whether you have enough to complete it? Otherwise, if you have laid the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone will make fun of you: 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish'. And when a king wages war against another king, does he go to fight without first sitting down to consider whether his ten thousand can stand against the twenty thousand of his opponent? And if not, while the other is still a long way off he sends messengers for peace talks.

»In the same way, none of you may become my disciple if he doesn't give up everything he has».

«Whoever does not follow me carrying his own cross cannot be my disciple»

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Today, while celebrating the memory of Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), we become aware that our time is always "God's time". Saint Ignatius' epoch - like so many others - was not an easy one neither for Europe nor for the Church: a period of time with the Popes residing in Avignon (submitted to France); a Western schism going on (three Popes at the same time, each one claiming to be the real one)... and it all ending up into the Protestant reformation.

Paradoxes of life, Ignatius of Loyola and the religious reformer Martín Luther (1546) were fully coetaneous and concurrent in time. But how different was the reaction - "reformation" - of each one. In point of fact, there is no better reform than identifying oneself with Jesus Christ: "whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:27). Poor, humble, obedient, merciful Jesus... During His passion, silence and discretion were His only "complaint".

Ignatius of Loyola lived years of courtly life, by dreaming with an air – which we could say – of "chivalrous" greatness. But his forced convalescence, owing to a serious war wound, was a providential opportunity to quietly read the lives of Jesus Christ and some saints: these are the authentic reformers! This "stirred up" his spirit, and he started to wonder: «What if I would do the same as Saint Francis or Saint Domingo? ».

Our age also needs some '' reformation '': «How I would like a church that is poor and for the poor! » (Pope Francis). There is no alternative: «In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples» (Lk 14:33). Before de-facto powers – let us not forget it - our strength comes from God. And behold, Saint Ignatius – by stripping himself off things and dreams - began to surrender to a life of prayer and attention to others. In that voyage, some other colleagues joined him to found the Society of Jesus, a foundation that has channeled countless fruits within the Church!