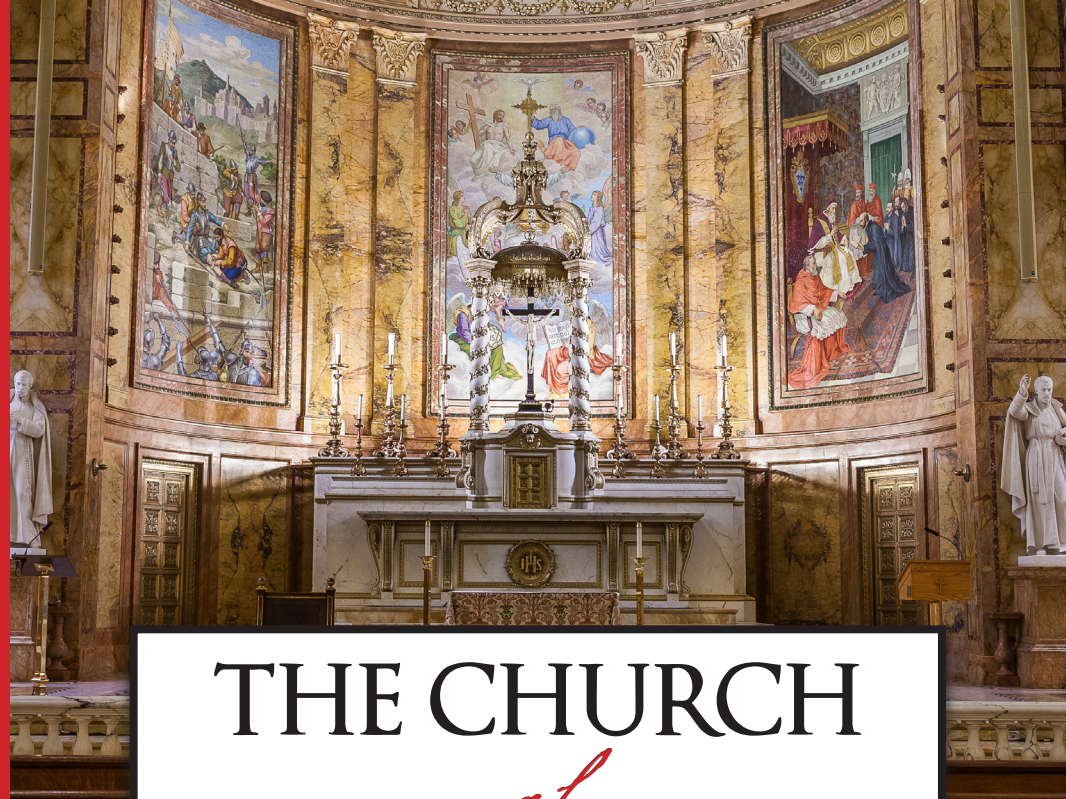




The Church of St. Ignatius Loyola
980 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10028
(212) 288-3588
www.stignatiusloyola.org



THE CHURCH *of* ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

— *A* —
Walking
Tour

THE CHURCH
of
ST. IGNATIUS
LOYOLA

*A
Walking
Tour*



*A parish of the Archdiocese of New York
entrusted to the administration of the Society of Jesus
since 1866.*



Welcome to The Church of St. Ignatius Loyola!


More than an edifice of beauty and grandeur, The Church of St. Ignatius Loyola is a vibrant parish community whose foundation rests on the faith life and commitment of all who worship here. For more than one hundred fifty years, our parishioners have embodied the Ignatian charisms of prayer, service, and community. Our building stones have been apostolic fervor and ardent compassion toward those in need. Our sacred space has been filled with the sublime majesty of reverential liturgy and the echoes of angelic choruses. Our cornerstone is the abiding love of God, which we celebrate each day in this holy place. Together in faith, we have directed our efforts to the greater glory of God, so that all may come to know Jesus Christ as our Lord and companion.

As you tour this magnificent church building, I invite you to listen intently so that you may hear the whispering voices of the generations of people who have worshipped here. Look more closely at each detail of this church, and you will begin to see tangible signs of the love invested in each architectural feature. And when you conclude your tour, pause for a moment and pray in thanksgiving for the gift of appreciating through brick and mortar the grandeur of God.

Finally, be assured that we pray for all those who walk through the portals of this church, for we all journey in faith as friends of the Lord. God bless you!

— Rev. Dennis J. Yesalonia, S.J.
Pastor



 On December 11, 1898, the Roman Catholic Church of St. Ignatius Loyola was dedicated by the Most Reverend Michael Corrigan, third Archbishop of New York. The building stands on the site of the former St. Lawrence O'Toole Church, founded in 1851 and named for a twelfth-century bishop of Dublin by the parish's first pastor, Father Eugene O'Reilly from Ireland. The parish was entrusted to the care of the Society of Jesus in 1866 and marked the Jesuits' first major apostolate in the Yorkville area of New York. Replacing a modest brick building dating to 1853—which replaced an even more modest wooden structure built in 1852—the present structure stands as testimony to both the growing affluence and confidence of the Catholic community on New York's Upper East Side near the turn of the century as well as the ambitious determination of Neil McKinnon, S.J., pastor of the parish from 1893–1907.

The Church of St. Ignatius Loyola was designed by Schickel & Ditmars, the firm that also designed the Jesuits' West 16th Street Church of St. Francis Xavier, dedicated in 1882. In contrast to Xavier's bold, neo-Baroque style, the Park Avenue exterior of St. Ignatius presents a more sedate, though by no means static, facade, reminiscent of the exterior of the Gesu, the Jesuits' mother church in Rome.

The original plans for the street front of The Church of St. Ignatius Loyola included a pair of towers designed to reach 210 feet above the ground, but this feature of the project was abandoned early, leaving only the





two copper-capped tower bases on either side of the central triangular pediment as hints of the grander scheme. Located directly beneath this pediment are the motto of the Society of Jesus, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (To the Greater Glory of God) and the Great Seal of the Society of Jesus, composed of a cross, three nails, and the letters IHS (the first three letters of Jesus' name in Greek, which later became a Latin acronym denoting Jesus the Savior of Humankind). Together, they proclaim to all who pass by that The Church of St. Ignatius Loyola is a Jesuit parish.

ENTRANCE

Passing through the great bronze outer doors, visitors enter the first interior space, the narthex (or foyer). Composed of grey and pink marble, the narthex is purposefully subdued, both in color and light, in order to heighten the experience of the visual drama waiting beyond the leather-clad inner doors.

To cross the threshold into the church's main interior is to enter into an unmistakable and unique sacred space. The main interior is filled with a fluid and vivid space awash in changing light, the play of bright and subdued colors and rich iconography. The basic design is that of a Roman basilica: a central west/east nave supported by two side aisles and interrupted only by shallow north/south transepts. The nave culminates in a curve-walled sanctuary apse that creates a 160-foot



long space well suited to concentrating visitors' attention on the drama of the liturgy.

The visual drama continues in the vibrant interaction of the side aisles' richly decorated and illuminated domes with the central nave's 70-foot barrel vault, covered in light from the multicolored upper windows. The vitality of this space is magnified by three recessing rows of columns: from the freestanding polished pink granite columns that support the arches of the central nave to the marble pilasters supporting the arches of the side aisles and much smaller marble pilasters framing the Stations of the Cross.

SANCTUARY

Two iconographic themes emerge in the decoration of the church; the first celebrates the salvation of Jesus while the second commemorates moments in the life of the church's namesake and patron saint, Ignatius Loyola, and the Jesuit order he founded. Most likely the first image visitors encounter upon entering the church is that of the crucified Christ in the sanctuary apse's semi-dome, located directly above the main altar. The painting's tiled appearance is meant to simulate the look of mosaic, the medium in which almost all other images in the church are rendered.

Sprouting from the foot of the cross is the expansive scroll of a colorful flowering vine painted against a gold leaf background—a vivid and beautiful image re-





minding the faithful that they are the branches whose life flows from the vine who is Christ the Savior. This image is also found in the semi-domes above the Sacred Heart and Blessed Mother altars and unifies the entire chancel area of the church. This visual unification is complimented by a theological one: the Sacred Heart—surrounded by the visionary St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and her Jesuit spiritual director, Saint Claude de la Colombière—faces the Blessed Mother, who is surrounded by the Archangel Gabriel of the Annunciation and the Prophet Isaiah, who foretold the virgin birth. Both of these devotions proclaim God's salvific love, which found its supreme expression in Christ's self-sacrifice upon the cross.

Rising directly above the central semi-dome is the great sanctuary arch, which depicts the glorified Christ seated in judgment surrounded by the Blessed Mother, here crowned Queen of Heaven, and St. Michael the Archangel who, as the defender against all powers of darkness, is pictured wielding a fiery sword. On either side of this central group are Sts. Peter and Paul, and Moses and Elias—these figures represent the New Law and the Old Law, which were conjoined in the person of Christ. Though some may find this pictorial program severe, it should bring to life the words of Psalm 63 and inspire the faithful who gaze upon it:

O God, you are my God—it is you I seek!
 For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts,
 In a land parched, lifeless, and without water.
 I look to you in the sanctuary to see your power and glory.
 For your love is better than life; my lips shall ever praise you!



BAPTISTRY

Reflecting the shape of the sanctuary apse on a smaller scale at the opposite end of the church, the baptistry is also composed of a half-drum topped by a semi-dome. An anonymous gift, the baptistry was the first part of the church's interior to be decorated and clearly no expense was spared in its creation. First to be noticed are the gilt flaming swords emblazoned on the semi-circular iron screen. Just as the fearless St. Michael and his fiery sword protect the precincts of heaven, these swords designate the precincts of the baptistry to be a special place within the church's sacred space and serve to remind the faithful that, at baptism, each person becomes "a child of the light," emboldened to stand against the powers of darkness.

The marble mosaic pavement of the baptistry depicts four rivers flowing from the foot of the marble font—a design suggesting Eden's river, the fountainhead for the four rivers of the world mentioned in Genesis. These rushing waters gather into a pool where lilies grow and fish frolic. Among the smaller fish is a large fish resting on an anchor, a second-century Christian symbol for Christ (the five letters spelling "fish" in Greek, *i ch th y s*, comprise an acronym for "Jesus, the Christ, of God, Son and Savior"). Drawing on this ancient symbolism, the motto at the edge of the pavement, taken from Tertullian, states "we little fishes are born again in the water of our fish Jesus Christ" and



reminds the faithful of the utterly transforming power of the sacrament of baptism.

Because the baptistry is also the Chapel of John the Baptist, its ornamentation illustrates the saint's ministry, his prophecies about Jesus, and Jesus' pronouncements about John. The three mosaics decorating the walls depict important moments in John's earthly life: his sanctification at the time of the Visitation, the culmination of his ministry in baptizing Jesus in the River Jordan, and his martyrdom.

The panels of the baptistry's altar have an art-historical as well as scriptural and theological significance. The two side panels are mosaic renditions of the Archangels Gabriel and Michael after the Florentine Renaissance master, Sandro Botticelli. The central panel—after the Umbrian Renaissance master, Pinturicchio—depicts the cousins Christ and John as children, engaged in the everyday task of collecting water at a country stream—a foreshadowing of the sacred drama played out on the banks of the Jordan long years after. The inscription above this panel, “Behold, I send my Angel” (*Ecce mitto Angelum Meum*), refers to Jesus' acknowledgement of John as his forerunner (Mt 11:10). Completing this mosaic program and located on the columns supporting the horizontal surface of the altar are the frail reeds which, unlike John, as Jesus says, are swayed by the wind (Mt 11:7).

Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company was responsible for the creation of the baptistry's semi-dome.



Composed of irregularly faceted glass slags referred to as “jewel” glass in the Tiffany lexicon, the dome covers this special precinct of the church with brilliant and sparkling light. At the apex of the design is a dove representing the Holy Spirit; rising from the waters of the font under this image symbolizes God’s claiming the newly baptized as his beloved child in the same way that Jesus was publicly claimed by God as His beloved Son on whom His favor rests (Mt 3:17).

The marble mosaic Stations of the Cross form the panels that comprise the majority of the wall space in the church. These murals are subdued both in color and design, befitting the gravity of the story they tell. Especially worthy to note in these panels is the cast of the sky mirroring the drama of the Lord’s Passion: the progressive subtle darkening of the sky culminates in the twilight atmosphere of the Twelfth Station—The Crucifixion.

The great 12-panel bronze doors located at the sanctuary end of the side aisles were gifts of the Simpson Family in 1929 and mark the close of a generation of very generous pre-Depression benefactions. The doors were designed by Patrick O’Gorman, S.J., pastor from 1924 to 1929; the north-side doors depict the saints who personify one of each of the eight Beatitudes, while the south-side doors depict the saints who personify one of each of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Crafted by the Long Island Bronze Company, these one-of-a-kind portals are beautiful compliments to the bronze sanctuary doors on either side of the main altar, the



bronze high pulpit, the hanging bronze sanctuary lamp, and the bronze choir screen.

IN THE STEPS OF IGNATIUS

The second iconographic theme in the church commemorates moments in the life of St. Ignatius (1491–1556) and the religious order he founded. Most prominent among these decorations are the three murals that adorn the walls of the sanctuary's apse. The mural on the left depicts the wounding of Inigo (later Ignatius) de Loyola in the Battle of Pamplona—the “happy fault” of the saint's youth that was the occasion for his long recovery and conversion to serve Christ as his new master. The mural on the right portrays a scene set in 1540: St. Ignatius and three of his companions kneel before Pope Paul III begging approval of the rule for the religious order they wish to found—the Society of Jesus. The central mural depicts the Apotheosis of St. Ignatius—the glorification of Ignatius at the time of his canonization.

The church's shallow transepts are each composed of two arches. On the south side, in the arch nearest the Sacred Heart altar, is a stained glass window depicting the appearance of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary in the chapel of her monastery at Paray-le-Monial; in the second arch is an altar and stained glass window dedicated to St. Joseph as the Patron of the Universal Church. Counterbalancing these





elements, the north transept features two memorials that continue the story of Ignatius and his companions.

In the arch nearest the Blessed Mother altar is a stained glass window picturing Ignatius in the cave at Manresa, below which is placed a replica of the Black Madonna—the famous Romanesque wooden sculpture in the Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat located near Barcelona. Together, the sculpture and window recount an important period in the saint's life. After returning to health following his recovery and conversion at home in Loyola, the young man traveled to Montserrat where, in front of the Black Madonna, he formally renounced his previous life as a noble and all associated vanities, put down his sword, dedicated himself to the service of Christ, and embraced a regime of poverty and corporal and spiritual penance.

Having moved into a cave at nearby Manresa on the banks of the Cardoner River to live out his new life as a hermit, Ignatius found himself driven to the edge of guilt-laden despair. It was while sitting in prayer on the banks of the river that Ignatius came to experience the consolation and the accompanying insight that God's love is freely and wholly given. This experience and insight establish the very foundation of his *Spiritual Exercises*—a seminal document of Christian spirituality that has aided people of all generations in discerning God's will in their lives. The window pictures Ignatius—having now cast away the three instruments of his distracting bodily penance much as he had put aside his sword and the unfulfilling life associated with



it—kneeling before a crucifix and looking up at the Blessed Mother who inspires his writing the *Spiritual Exercises*. Armed with his transforming experience and insight, Ignatius left Manresa and engaged the world.

Since their composition, the *Spiritual Exercises* have helped bring to Ignatius' side many loyal companions desiring to serve Christ and work for "the greater glory of God" by following the saint's rule for religious life. Fittingly, the altar "Consecrated to All the Canonized Sons of St. Ignatius" is located next to the Manresa window and the Black Madonna in the transept's adjoining arch. Above the altar is a stained glass window which pictures Ignatius and his brother Jesuit saints gathered around their Lord whose name they bear, and, below, all of the Society's blesseds and martyrs, bearing palm branches that denote their sufferings and victories.

FAITHFUL COMPANIONS

Notable among the saints of the Society of Jesus are St. Francis Xavier, the great "Apostle to the Indies," and St. John Francis Regis, the great evangelist of the Alps, for whom the nearby high school is named. Befitting their heroic apostolic works, large marble statues of these two saints are located in the sanctuary on the south and north sides, respectively, of the main altar.

Equally worthy of note, and held in great affection because of their youthful zeal, are the "Boy Saints" of the





Society of Jesus—John Berchmans, Aloysius Gonzaga, and Stanislaus Kostka. The altar dedicated to them as “Patrons of Youth” bears their statues, rendered in marble, set within a rich frame of marble and gilt bronze decorations. This altar is located directly across from the baptistry at the choir end of the nave.

St. Ignatius Loyola’s unique sacred space is filled with sacred music that both complements the visual dynamism of the building and deepens devotion at the liturgy and other rituals that occur within its walls. Much of this music comes from the church’s magnificent organ, dedicated in 1993. Built by N.P. Mander of London, this instrument is New York City’s largest mechanical action (tracker) pipe organ and the largest mechanical action pipe organ ever to have been built in the British Isles. The exterior case, rising 45 feet from the floor of the choir loft to within inches of the top of the barrel vault, is fashioned from French oak harvested from huge trees planted in the 18th century. The organ contains over 5,000 pipes and weighs approximately 30 tons.

It is in the lofty heights of the barrel vault that the last motifs to be looked at are found. Located in the seven spandrels (triangular architectural features) at the base of each side of the vault are octagonal gold medallions intended to be filled with portraits of the prophets, on the north side, and the Doctors of the Church, on the south side. Only one portrait on each side has ever been completed—the prophet Isaiah and St. Augustine.





Along the median line of the vault, alternating with the four great bronze starburst light clusters, are four ecclesiastical coat of arms and seals. From the sanctuary end, they are: the coat of arms of Leo XIII, pope at the time of the dedication of the church; the coat of arms of the Archdiocese of New York; the seal of the Society of Jesus; and the seal representing the consecration of the United States to Mary Immaculate. These various devices illustrate the levels of the Catholic Church that this church building embodies.

It is our hope that a visit to St. Ignatius—whether for a liturgy, quiet prayer, a concert, or a simple tour—will engage your heart and senses, and dispose you to experience more deeply the reality of God’s unfailing salvific love—the story of which unfolds within these walls, within the Church, and throughout the world in which we live and work.





THE FOUNDING OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

St. Ignatius, born Inigo Lopez de Loyola in 1491, was a man whose life was marked by deep desires. While recuperating from a battle wound, the young noble began to experience the fading of his romantic drive to perform chivalrous and gallant deeds at the same time his wish to follow Christ as his new lord began to grow strong. Full of zeal, Ignatius became a hermit, embarking upon a life of poverty and corporal and spiritual penance. Transformed by an experience of spiritual consolation and the accompanying insight that God's love is freely given, Ignatius cast aside the zealous penitential practices that were leading him to despair. It was at this time that Ignatius began to learn the ways of "discerning spirits."

These experiences and insights became the foundation of his *Spiritual Exercises*—Ignatius' singularly important contribution to the life of the Church from the Counter-Reformation onward. Ignatius was filled with a new desire to help people find God at work in their own lives. Tempered by a recognition of the need for advanced learning in philosophy and theology, Ignatius undertook studies at Barcelona, Alcala, and Paris—all the while guiding people through the *Spiritual Exercises*. It was through this work that Ignatius drew to his side a band of companions who took vows of poverty and chastity. Soon after the completion of their studies,



this band of men was hard at work in northern Italy preaching and tending the sick and the poor.

Eventually, these companions, now numbering nine, made a communal discernment—based on their experience of joy and effectiveness together—that God was calling them to band together formally. In 1540, Paul III formally recognized these men as a new religious order—The Society of Jesus. Building on their experiences and desire to work for “the greater glory of God,” these first Jesuits, and all successive generations of companions following in their forebearers’ footsteps, dedicated themselves to teaching, preaching the Word of God, working with the poor and sick, and bringing the Good News preached by the Lord to those who knew not his name.



CREDITS

AUTHOR

Paul Tabor

EDITORS

Zac Davis

Ashley McKinless

PHOTOGRAPHY

Laurie Lambrecht (*cover, pages 2–20, 24–30, 36*)

Bernard J. Reilly (*pages 22, 32, 34, 38*)

COVER & BOOK DESIGN

Elizabeth O'Sullivan





Published
in commemoration
of the 150th anniversary
of
The Church of St. Ignatius Loyola
becoming a Jesuit parish.

150
1866-2016

