

Our Father (Russ) Over the years that I have been presenting these Midday Prayers,
FONT-D.200 it seems that only once before has 31st July fallen on one of my
15 broadcasting days. And on that occasion I didn't talk about what might have been the obvious topic. You'll know what I'm getting at if you're aware of the church calendar of saints' days, and that I am a Jesuit. Yes: it's the feast day of St Ignatius of Loyola, the man who founded the Jesuits 400-odd years ago. His name, at least, is familiar enough (I think) in the history books, tho' the popular myths about him and the religious order he established do him far less than justice. It's the price, maybe, of being so inspiring and influential a man, in many ways ahead of his time, a complex character with a rather romantic and colourful personal history, as well as a man of single-minded dedication and the ability to be a wise and far-seeing leader for others, guiding with strong gentleness. No doubt both his friends and followers and his opponents and detractors have over-emphasised certain aspects of his life, writings, influence and his place in the history of the church and of western European culture in general. But it's his personal holiness that I'd like to draw your attention to today: his devotion to Christ as his Master, Lord, and his complete dedication to the service of Christ's church, for him, meant caring in every way possible for people and their needs, in the most effective way he could find.

And that meant, too, a particular loyalty and devotion to the Church as the Body of Christ, the presence of Christ, in the world: and a special commitment and loyalty to the ~~Pope~~ person of the Pope as the representative of Christ. This is a point that has often been misunderstood, and not only in malice. Ignatius wasn't an impractical man: there was a lot he saw that needed reform, changing — and he said so and did his best to bring authorities to his way of thinking, to agreeing with his initiatives and his vision of what could and should be done. His being a saint std. be an encouragement to anyone who is impatient for the kingdom of God, for anyone too whose path to God has been a very twisting, winding one, thro' false beginnings, the pleasures and pride of the world. And his last years were spent almost entirely in administration as we call it now — sitting at a desk, writing memos, directives, letters, reports, position-papers, orchestrating the work, training and activities of his first group of followers, whose enthusiasms and strong characters made them quite a handful for anyone to direct and co-ordinate. Today, let us pray thro' his intercession for the work of the church in today's world, for all Christians who commit themselves to the service of Christ and their fellow human beings, that the fire of his devotion and service may inspire all of us to more zealous work for the spreading of God's kingdom.

Mystic Prayer

MUSIC (Comm. Song) PRAYERS © R. Brew. 31.7.