

## **Ignatius of Loyola and the Gift of Freedom**

Ignatius of Loyola's passion for God was characterized by his determination to identify those attachments in his life that took away his freedom to love God. His desire to follow God's will was characterized by a willingness to let go of those attachments. In his experience of the unconditional love of God, Ignatius discovered the desire to be free to follow God's invitation to lasting happiness. All who experience the unconditional love of God desire the freedom to respond to God's grace and wisdom.

The First Letter of John describes this experience of freedom in the love of God: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment and whoever fears has not reached perfect love. We love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:18–19). God's love is God's gift that sets us free to love God in return. Only when we are free will we love God with our whole heart and soul, mind and being, and love our neighbor as ourselves. How do we find the love that sets us free? In the writings called the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius of Loyola shows us that prayer, reflection on Scripture, self-reflection, and spiritual guidance are several means of setting our hearts free.

This excerpt is adapted from *Putting on the Heart of Christ: How the Spiritual Exercises Invite Us to a Virtuous Life*, by Gerald M. Fagin, SJ (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010), pages 46–51. Copyright © 2010 Catholic Society of Religious and Literary Education.

