

July 31, 2008
Thursday of the Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time
Memorial of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Readings of the day may be found on the following link:

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab>

Jeremiah 18:1-6

Psalms 146:1b-2, 3-4, 5-6ab

Matthew 13:47-53

The Kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away.

It is impossible for me to not speak of discernment on this, the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola. His gift of discernment makes separating the good from the bad, or even, the good from the better good, a much easier task. He encouraged us, through prayer, to weed from our life all that is not 'of God' and increase in our life all that brings us into deeper relationship with God. I remember a story I read about his personal process of discernment. He 'felt' called to spend more time in prayer. However, spending more time in prayer left him tired and unable to teach his novitiates and write the rule for the congregation he was called to lead. Through his form of prayerful consideration of his choices (which became known as discernment), he discovered that God's plan for him was to teach and lead this new group of men in their work rather than spend more time in solitude. The daily decisions we need to make can be made according to our personal desires or in the light of God's plan for us. There is a simple method we can use daily to put the practice of Ignatius in place in our lives today: at the end of each day we ask ourselves what of today was life-giving to me and what of today was death-dealing to me? We pay attention to what we discover brings light and love into our lives and what brings darkness and indifference, and from the daily observances of our examins we discover what behaviors, activities, and, maybe even people, we need to increase and what we need to decrease in our life. On this the feast of St. Ignatius, let us remember him with the prayer he taught his followers to say:

"Receive, Lord, all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. You have given me all that I have, all that I am, and I surrender all to your divine will, that you dispose of me. Give me only your love and your grace. With this I am rich enough, and I have no more to ask."