



Holy Indifference in Ignatian Spirituality

In the First Principle and Foundation Ignatius invites us to learn holy indifference to the particular circumstances of our lives. This term is easily misunderstood. For Ignatius, indifference is not about being detached, resignation, fatalism, or the absence of desire. Nothing could be further from the truth! Perhaps we should call Holy Indifference, “Passionate Indifference,” because it is full of desire. Ignatius taught that God has given us our deepest desires, which are good. Our deepest desires are for God and God’s reign, to be closer to God, and to abide in God. God leads us and calls us through these deepest desires. It is true that our desires can be, and often are, malformed, but the solution to this is not to clamp down on or eliminate desire. Instead, we are invited to increase our desire, to desire more.

Holy Indifference is not a state where we do not care what happens; instead, it is a state of true love. We have found the pearl of great price, the treasure in the field (Mat 13:44-46), and are glad to give up everything else to obtain this wonderful treasure. When we truly know the love of God, God’s goodness, care, and presence with us, we have found this treasure. We find we have been given a kind of spiritual freedom where we trust deeply enough to say, “Though I may have many preferences, what I truly want is what you, Lord, want. I know that you are good, desire good for me, and you will supply me with everything I need. Even when you lead me in the way of the cross, you do not abandon me, but I am crucified with you, becoming even more united with you in love.” This is the kind of generous spirit the Lord offers us.

Do you find it a struggle to approach life with holy indifference? That is normal. You are starting a 9-month journey where God is working to increase your love and stir up your deepest desires. Give yourself generously to the Lord. Let the Lord fill your prayers with love. Find the treasure in the field. Fall in love, and that will change everything.