**Background on the Saint:** St. Ignatius joined the army at age seventeen, mostly looking for glory, and dueled many people in his search for glory. He once dueled a Moor who denied the divinity of Christ and ran him through! He took up arms for a duke who recognized his diplomacy and leadership skills and who trained and led him through many battles without injury. But in 1521, when he was 30 years old, he was wounded at a battle at Pamplona when a canonball broke one of his legs and injured the other. He was taken back to the castle he was born in and underwent many surgeries. While he was recovering from his injuries, he read numerous texts on the life of Christ and on the lives of the saints and this is when his true conversion began. A year later, at the Benedictine Monastery of Santa Maria Montserrat, he hung up his military garments before a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary and decided to become a solider for the Catholic Faith. Later, he founded the Society of Jesus with seven companions, six of whom he met at the University of Paris while studying there, including St. Francis Xavier.

**Background on the Writings (letters):**

*Practical Norms*: In early 1549, Wilhelm IV, Duke of Bavaria, sent a request to Pope Paul III asking for three Jesuits to teach at the University of Ingolstadt. Ever since the death of Johann Eck[[1]](#footnote-1) in 1543, the university had declined in the quality of professors and in the number of students. Wilhelm intended to keep the university a bastion against the Reformation, as it had been during the days of Eck and, thus, he requested the Jesuits to help restore it to its former prestige. Since the duke had already been acquainted with Claude Jay, who had taught at Ingolstadt, the duke asked for him by name and desired two others. Pope Paul sent the duke's request on to Ignatius, who agreed to send Jay, Alfonso Salmerón, and Peter Canisius[[2]](#footnote-2) to Germany. Both Canisius and Salmerón were called from the college in Messina, and as the group was about to depart Rome, Ignatius drafted a list of instructions indicating how they were to act and what should be their goal. Their first task was to be of service to the university, but Ignatius also felt that they were to see to the spiritual needs of the citizenry suffering from the inroads made by Lutheranism, and to look ahead to the possibility of starting a college of the Society there. On their way north the three Jesuits stopped at Bologna to take their doctorate, which they successfully did on October 4, and arrived in Ingolstadt on November 13. What is given below is the first part of the instruction, which was originally written in Latin [Ep. 12:240-242].

*On Scruples*: Juan Marín[[3]](#footnote-3) was a young Spanish Jesuit teaching in the Jesuit college in Bivona, Sicily. He did wonderful work among the people and manifested a great zeal for souls but, unfortunately, he had a scrupulous conscience and continually suffered torment therefrom. Ignatius was especially interested in him since he too had suffered from scruples and, thus, he wanted to do whatever he could to free Marín of his affliction. Writing through Polanco, Ignatius offers him remedies to overcome his scrupulosity, insisting that he must submit himself to the judgment of his superior and confide in God. Marín did not live to enjoy a scruple-free conscience, for only weeks after receiving this letter he was suddenly taken ill and died on the following day, September 16. Polanco composed this letter in Spanish [Ep. 12:30-31].

**Primer Questions**

**Biblical Reflection:** On line 24, (paragraph 5) directs his priests to imitate Timothy (Phil: 2:21) in being “anxious“ for the welfare of others and warning them to not be line some who “all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ”. How do you engage with others? What are your thoughts? Do you try to manipulate the conversation or situation to your own advantage? Or do you earnestly try to move the conversation in a direction that fills God’s will for their souls? Are you moving them closer to God or acting in self-interest? Have you ever thought of taking selfish, non-God directing speech to confession?

**Catechetical Reflection:** CCC 2425 sums up CCC 2423-2324 regarding systems of government that exploit humans as cogs in the machine or permit unregulated profit drive market policies to rein. The CCC instructs a middle way. St. Ignatius, likewise, directs his priests to seek a middle way and not take sides in party strife. How often do we find ourselves seeking out “the closest fit” to our beliefs? Do you like to take sides? Or do you seek a middle way that is a Catholic Way? Bold and unpopular may be that path to unifying the parties in dispute and following God’s will. What area of your life can you adopt this kind of approach?

**Spiritual Reflection:** Our Saint precisely focuses us on the cause of Scruples – Pride. “…, if you have true humility and submissiveness, your scruples will not cause you so much trouble. Pride is the fuel they feed on…” (lines 92-94). But he points to the fact that Pride, manifested in scruples have another ill affect – impeding God’s Will being done, more fully, through his servant (see lines 71-75). Have you ever looked at scruples as impeding God’s will? How about as offending God by incompleteness of your fullness of being lived out to His service? Your Scruples can be an obstacle, just as demons put obstacles in our paths, and lead us from the narrow road. Will the insight that you are working against God, in scrupulosity, help you to live by the law and the beatitudes and not legalistic entrapment? What will you change in your thoughts to bring this about?

1. Eck was a renowned German theologian, born in 1486. He came to Ingolstadt in 1510, and after Martin Luther’s break with the Church, entered into controversy with him and Karlstadt. Eck wrote many anti-Lutheran treatises, but his most famous work, Enchiridion, was directed against Melanchthon’s Loci communes. Eck died at Ingolstadt on February 10, 1543. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Canisius, whose family name was Kanis, was born in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, on May 8, 1521. While a student in Cologne he heard about the recently established Society of Jesus and went to Mainz to search out Pierre Favre and to learn more about it. Favre led him through the Exercises and accepted him into the Society on May 8, 1543. He was ordained on June 12, 1546, and served as Cardinal Truchsess’ peritus at the Council of Trent in 1547. His next assignment was teaching in Sicily, from which task he was called to go to Germany. Canisius remained in Ingolstadt until March 1552, when he went to Vienna, and then in 1555 to Prague. He was appointed provincial of Germany in 1556 and held office until 1569, when he went to Innsbruck to devote his time writing. In 1580 he travelled to Fribourg, Switzerland, to found a new college and remained there until his death on December 21, 1597. He was beatified by pope Pius IX on August 2, 1864, and canonized by Pope Pius XI on May 21, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Marín was born in Valencia, Spain, probably in 1529, and was commonly known among his Jesuit brethren as Valentino. He entered the Society in his native city in 1553 and then came to Italy for studies. He was ordained in Palermo in 1556 and unexpectedly died at Bivona on September 16 of that year. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)