

Festivals and Saints' Days (w/c 26th July)

26th July

Saints Anne and Joachim - *parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

The title of this entry more-or-less tells us everything we know of Anne and Joachim. Indeed, even their names come to us not from Holy Scripture, but the apocryphal Gospel of James (which was not written by Saint James - any of them) and other Church tradition. Equally, of course, it is indisputable that our Lady had parents and that they had brought her up in faith and the fear of God; and for this we honour them.



31st July

Saint Ignatius Loyola - *religious*

Ignatius was born the youngest of thirteen children to a minor aristocratic family of the Basque country in 1491. Initially marked out for an ecclesiastical career (literally so, since he received the clerical tonsure when he was seven), instead he embarked on life as a soldier.



He was said to have been militarily skilled; but in 1521 he was gravely injured and had to return to his family home to recuperate; and his health was never completely restored. During this period of convalescence, he experienced a call to contemplation after the Franciscan model. After a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he embarked on studies first in Barcelona and then in Paris. Here, Ignatius gathered around him six companions, who with him in 1534 took solemn vows of their life-long work. In 1539, this group was formed into the *Society of Jesus*, which sent people across Europe to create schools, colleges and seminaries. Ignatius was the first superior. A key aspect of life as a Jesuit was the *Spiritual Exercises* devised by Ignatius. He died in Rome in 1556, probably of a variant of malaria. He was canonised in 1622.