

DECISION MAKING - REFLECTION



I ask for what I desire as we begin this topic



I pray that my entire being become open to God's grace



I imagine these texts being addressed to me, and note my response

Grace: To find peace and consolation in our choices and decisions

On 4 March 1541, Ignatius and five companions came together in Rome. It was agreed that the task of drafting Constitutions should be handed over to Ignatius and Codure, and that the success of the operations of the Society needed a strong and steady hand at the helm. Therefore, it was necessary to determine who would be the head. 'Up until this time,' Polanco would later write, 'Ignatius had steered the rudder of their little boat more like a father who had begotten them all in the Spirit, or as a friend who had gained their complete confidence by his prudence and charity, than like a superior who had been invested with legitimate powers to govern them.' In April 1541, as expected, Ignatius was elected unanimously by the ten other companions. Those who voted gave reasons for their choice. Xavier expressed himself in these moving terms: 'Ignatius is the one who brought us together with no little effort and who will also, not without effort, be able to preserve, rule, and make us advance from good to better, since he knows us best.'

The other five who were present in Rome when the ballots were counted were overjoyed, but not Ignatius. He tells us in some jottings 'how he felt in his soul' in regard to the acceptance of the election results. He stated that he would prefer to be governed than to govern; that he did not feel capable of directing himself, much less anyone else. He spoke of his many bad habits, past and present, and of his many sins, his faults and his miseries. He begged his companions to reflect for three days on the subject, 'in order to find someone who could fulfil this office better for all concerned'. They agreed to this proposal, 'although not very willingly'. At the end of four days, the vote was taken again and the results were the same as before. Ignatius decided that he would leave the decision in the hands of his confessor, and he went off to the Franciscan convent, where for three days he made his confession of all his sins, 'since the day he was able to sin, down to the present time', and also all his infirmities and bodily miseries.

His confessor let him know in unmistakable terms his decision, that Ignatius should accept the result: not to do so was tantamount to resisting the Holy Spirit. Ignatius asked his confessor to reflect more in the Lord over what he had said and to come to a peaceful solution. After this, the confessor should write out his decision on a piece of paper, enclose it in a sealed envelope addressed to the Society, and send it to his companions. Three days later, the confessor sent his reply, stating that 'Ignatius should take in hand the affairs and direction of the Society'. So he had to accept and resign himself to the task.

Brian Grogan SJ - [The Reluctant General - Alone and on Foot](#)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Who is making the decisions in your life for you?
2. Who is imagining your life for you?