



# RENEWING THE EARTH

LIVING LAUDATO SI' IN  
THE YEAR OF IGNATIUS

Ignatius



Jesuit Conference  
Office of Justice and Ecology

## CANNONBALL EXAMEN: THE CRY OF THE EARTH AS A CANNONBALL MOMENT

*BY: ERIC CLAYTON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION,  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE AND ECOLOGY, JESUIT CONFERENCE OF CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES*

A cannonball moment, the Ignatian tradition suggests, is a moment of both agony and opportunity. The phrase is a literal one, referring to a specific moment in the story of St. Ignatius of Loyola, when a wartime injury spurred a lifelong conversion.

The soldier, Iñigo de Loyola, allowed pride to triumph over prudence when he refused to surrender to the French at the Battle of Pamplona. His arrogance earned him a cannonball to the leg—and a perpetual limp. But he wasn't the only one impacted; his decision led to the death and disfigurement of countless others.

A cannonball moment, then, is something we may choose unknowingly—or, it may be chosen for us. Regardless, the moment is stark; there is no going back to the way things were before.

For us, living with the effects of climate change now, in this very moment, we find ourselves faced with our own global cannonball moment. Like Ignatius, we see the threat looming on the horizon: monster storms, freak heat waves, devastating drought. This reality is not of our choosing, and yet we can not escape it.

Will we allow our pride to govern our decisions? Or, will we choose the path of prudence? Will we seize this moment as the opportunity it is? After all, we know that countless lives and livelihoods around the world are at stake; this cannonball does not strike discreetly.

# THE EXAMEN

*And so, we begin this examen recognizing that our God of love and compassion is present to us even amidst this challenging time.*

## **THANKSGIVING:**

I thank God for the beauty and wonder of creation. I imagine God's Spirit dwelling amidst creation, God's voice uttering: "It is good." I rejoice in this good world, in God's Spirit made manifest through it, in the sustenance of the earth through which God lovingly provides for my very being.

## **LIGHT:**

I ask God's Spirit to reveal to me both the agony and the opportunity inherent in this moment. I pray for the grace to be fortified as I contemplate the pain and suffering endured by God's created world, by God's people, as a result of this ecological cannonball. What of God's dream has been damaged? Lost? Forgotten? I ask for the grace to see clearly a new path forward.

## **DETAIL:**

In the presence of God's Spirit, I review my day, my week, my month. With honesty, I recall those moments when I had a choice between pride and prudence. Did I act in a way that helped to heal our common home? Or, did I desecrate creation through my actions—or failures to act? In so doing, did I cause harm to others? Or, have I been about the work of nurturing others harmed by this ecological cannonball?

## **NEED FOR GOD:**

What feelings arise in me? Turmoil, anxiety, fear, freedom, awe, joy, happiness, lightness, anticipation, creativity, humor, grief? Do these feelings lead me toward God and God's creation, or away from God?

## **MOVING FORWARD:**

I recognize that my call to ecological conversion—like Ignatius' own conversion—is a lifelong endeavor. I ask God for the grace to continue in this work, recalling that Ignatius considered himself a pilgrim for the remainder of his life, striving ever more to live more deeply God's dream for the world. I name any additional graces I desire as I continue on as a pilgrim.

I conclude with an **"Our Father."**