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## VENERABLE IGNACIA DEL ESPIRITU SANTO

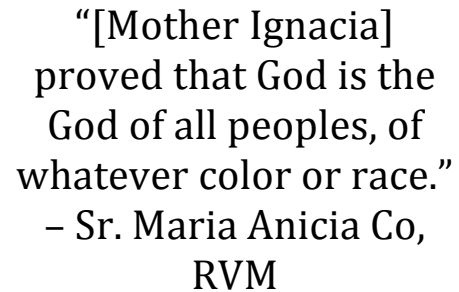
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Ignacia was born in the Spanish-colonial Philippines to a Filipina mother and Chinese father. Like many parents, Ignacia's dreamed for her to get married – truly there were not many other realistic options for them to hope for their daughter. However, from an early age, Ignacia had other ideas.

Inspired by a Jesuit priest who gave her the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola, Ignacia decided to “remain in the service of the Divine Majesty.”

Unfortunately, being a native Filipina in a Spanish colony also meant that there were entrenched social barriers to her joining a religious community. Although there were religious orders for women established in the Philippines by that time, native Filipinas were prohibited from joining these congregations. Ignacia was denied admittance to two of these congregations, but she did not let that discourage her; the Divine Majesty she served did not exclude based on race. Instead, she formed her own religious community comprised of Filipina women like herself. Ignacia and her companions founded a school

for girls and led retreats for women, both Spanish and native. Their work ultimately attracted the notice of the archbishop, who wrote to the Spanish king requesting recognition of and protection for Ignacia's community. Ignacia's unwillingness to relinquish her call to serve God, even in the face of difficulty and unjust societal expectation, led her to found what would become the first and only religious community for Filipinas. Since the seventeenth century, this community, now known as the Religious of the Virgin Mary, continues to be active. Now, the Religious of the Virgin Mary minister not only in Ignacia's homeland, the Philippines, but also in the United States.



“[Mother Ignacia] proved that God is the God of all peoples, of whatever color or race.”  
– Sr. Maria Anicia Co,  
RVM

The light Ignacia kindled continues to illuminate the darkness of racial prejudice and dispel its shadows. As Ignacia believed, the God we serve is not one of racial exclusivity, but a God of love and justice for all.

### PRAY

*Venerable Ignacia, Pray with us and for us that we may have the same courage you did to work for racial justice, especially when it challenges the status quo;*

*that, with you, the Church may always stand in solidarity with those “of whatever color or race,” who are marginalized in society;*

*that, like you, we may root all our actions in the example of Christ and “remain in the service of the Divine majesty.” Amen.*