

+ On the shoulders of giants +

Lessons in holiness from the pro's who have gone before us

Name: Ignatius of Antioch

Lifetime: Martyred in the year 108 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Trajan

Location: Antioch, Syria

bio: Ignatius lived during an amazing time of the Church's history. The Church was spreading like wildfire across the known world because of the work and witness of the Apostles, and at the same time facing a lot of persecution from the rulers of those empires. But, as the writer Tertullian has stated: *"The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians,"* and the Church was only **strengthened** by these trials and the witness of the saints. Ignatius was one of these early martyrs, and he was arrested during his time as bishop for discouraging his people to join in the pagan sacrifices decreed by the Emperor Trajan. He was bound and led to Rome to be martyred, but managed to write 8 letters to the different churches and his friends along the way, to keep their spirits up and ask for their prayers, that he would be able to accept his death with joy and without fear, filled with hope and zeal to glorify Christ's name. He was thrown to the lions at the Roman Colosseum, and his fame and witness spread throughout the Christian Church. His bones rest in the Basilica of St. Clement, in Rome.



St. Ignatius of Antioch

Bishop and Martyr of the
Early Church

Famous Words: "I am God's wheat, and shall be ground by their teeth so that I may become Christ's pure bread."

Feast Day: October 17th

The Martyrs: Lovers of the Eucharist

Would you die for someone that you didn't know? If not, then what about someone that you do *love*? The fact that the martyrs were so willing to die for their faith, is a testament to the intense *love* that they had for the Lord. This kind of love can't be sustained by just head-knowledge of Jesus. There is a big difference between knowing *about* someone and really *knowing* that person. The love that we owe the Lord is a kind of love that can only develop through a deep, committed prayer life. Because their lives were centered around prayer, the Word, and the "breaking of the bread," the martyrs were able to draw the connection between the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and the sacrifice of their lives that they owed Him, for His glory. It is this same sacrifice that we remember every week at the Eucharist, and ought to spur us on to find ways to offer Christ our own lives - every moment of every day. Many people would accept that Christ died for us, but are we bold enough to accept that we ought to then **live for Him**? We too often run from suffering, when we are really called to embrace it as an opportunity to grow in holiness and come to better know and love our Eucharistic Lord. Meditate on the excerpt on the back of this page, from St. Ignatius' writings before his death...

"All the ends of the world, and all the kingdoms of this earth, shall profit me nothing. It is better for me to die for the sake of Jesus Christ, than to reign over all the ends of the earth. "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?" I long after the Lord, the Son of the true God and Father... Jesus Christ. Him I seek, who died for us and rose again. Pardon me, brethren: do not hinder me in attaining to life; for Jesus is the life of believers. Do not wish to keep me in a state of death, for life without Christ is death. While I desire to belong to God, do not ye give me over to the world. Suffer me to obtain pure light: when I have gone thither, I shall indeed be a man of God. Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of Christ, my God. If any one has Him within himself, let him consider what I desire, and let him have sympathy with me, as knowing how I am straitened."

(<http://www.catecheticonline.com/Church-Fathers-1-Ignatius.html>)

Because the saints are so in love with the Lord and committed to spreading the Gospel, oftentimes their very lives reflect the paradox of the Gospel message, that for their beliefs, the world might call them crazy just like the leaders pressured Jesus for challenging the social norms of His time. How is St. Ignatius' mindset in his writings contrary to that of the world?

What types of things does the *world* tell us to fill our lives with, to attain a "fullness" of life and be happy?

The martyrs knew that Christ was worth so much more than even the greatest gifts of this life. What are some of the greatest blessings you have received in your life? (Consider in prayer: Would you be willing to offer up even those things, if you were in Ignatius' shoes?)
