

Reflection Thursday Week 28 St Ignatius of Antioch 2024

St Ignatius of Antioch was the third bishop of Antioch. He was born in Syria mid-1st century and is believed to have been taught by the Apostle John alongside Saint Polycarp. Around the year 70, Ignatius became Bishop of Antioch, assuming leadership of a Christian community formerly led by Saint Peter before his move to Rome. Antioch, located in modern-day Turkey, was a key city of the Roman Empire where the followers of Jesus were first called 'Christians'. Ignatius' letters reveal a deep passion for Church unity, his warnings against heresy, and his profound devotion to the Eucharist, which he called the "medicine of immortality." He is credited with the earliest surviving use of the term "Catholic" to describe the Church, emphasising its universality and completeness.

As he faced martyrdom, Ignatius wrote: *"Now I begin to be a disciple. Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let tearings, breakings, and dislocations of bones; let cutting off of members; let shattering of the whole body; and let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ."*

Saint Ignatius bore final witness to Christ in the Flavian Amphitheatre in Rome, where he was mauled to death by lions.

Quotes:

- *Christianity is not a matter of persuading people of particular ideas, but of inviting them to share in the greatness of Christ. So, pray that I may never fall into the trap of impressing people with clever speech, but instead I may learn to speak with humility, desiring only to impress people with Christ himself.*
- *We recognize a tree by its fruit, and we ought to be able to recognize a Christian by his action. The fruit of faith should be evident in our lives, for being a Christian is more than making sound professions of faith. It should reveal itself in practical and visible ways. Indeed, it is better to keep quiet about our beliefs, and live them out, than to talk eloquently about what we believe, but fail to live by it.*