

disease in the Church, but in the case of Ignatius it is the mark of a hero. This heroic note runs through all the Epistles and he quotes Romans 4-5 as his source for this zeal...

Ignatius contends for the recognition of the authority of the ministers of the church. "Do nothing", he writes to the Magnesians, "without the bishop and the presbyters."...

The chief heresy of his day came as noted from Docetists. Ignatius stresses the fact that Christ was truly born, ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate...was truly raised from the dead...

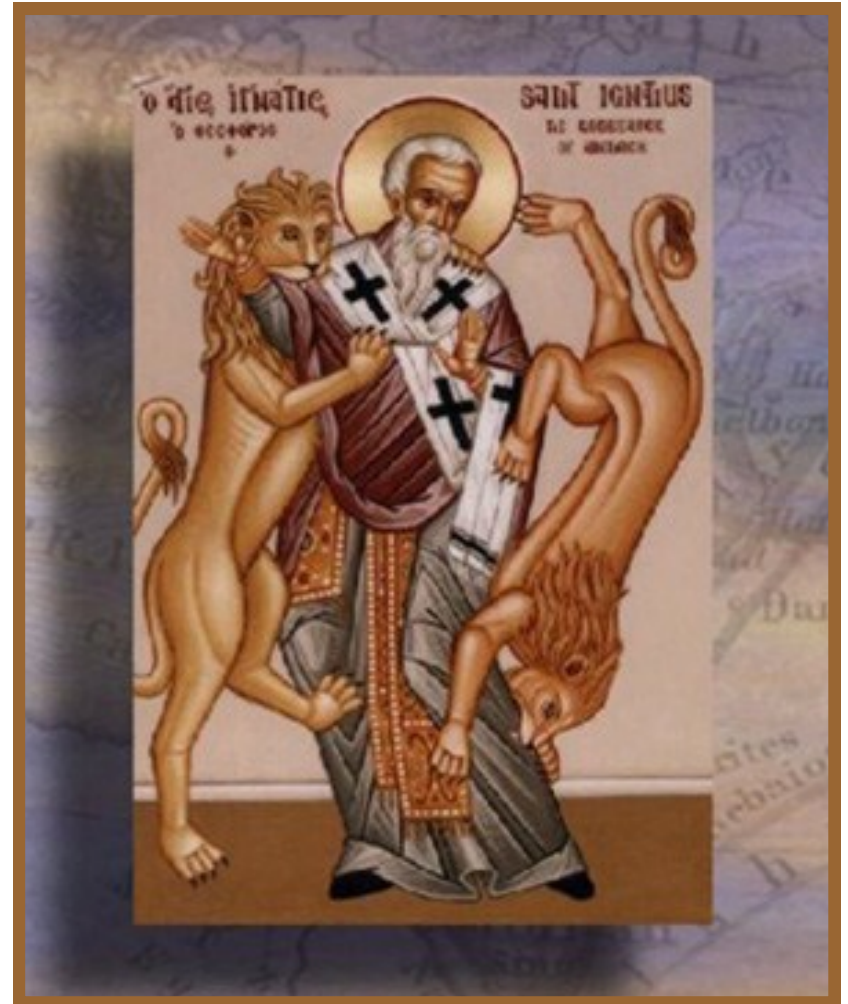
Besides insisting on the reality of the humanity of Christ, Ignatius is the earliest writer outside the New Testament to describe Christ as the only true physician as outlined in Eph. 7. Also he is the first writer outside the New Testament to mention the Virgin Birth (Eph. 19)... He describes the Eucharist bread as the "medicine of immortality and the antidote against death"...

His great concern for the unity and order of the Church was greater than his willingness to deny his Lord Jesus Christ. Not to his own suffering did Ignatius draw attention, but to the love of God which strengthened him. He knew the price of commitment and would not deny Christ, even to save his own life. *(excerpted from: www.nndb.com; www.americancatholic.org; [//satucket.com](http://satucket.com))

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Saint Ignatius of Antioch Bishop and Martyr

Feast Day: February 1



Early Church Father
Buried in Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City

Saint Ignatius of Antioch

*Saint Ignatius Theophoros, was born in Syria c. 35 AD. and died c. 110 AD. After the Apostles, Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch in Syria. His predecessor, of whom little is known, was named Euodius. Whether he knew any of the Apostles directly is uncertain. He is considered one of the Apostolic Fathers of the early Christian Church.

While no one connected with the history of Church during this time period is more famous than Ignatius, there is little known of his life except for the very end of it. Our only trustworthy information is derived from the letters which he wrote to various churches on his last journey from Antioch to Rome, and from the short epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians.

The earlier patristic writers seem to have known no more than we do. Irenaeus gives a quotation from his Epistle to the Romans and does not appear to know the name of the author, since he describes him as "one of those belonging to us." If Eusebius possessed any knowledge about Ignatius apart from the letters he never reveals it. The only shred of extra information which he gives us is the statement that Ignatius "was the second successor of Peter in the bishopric of Antioch."

Of course in later times a cloud of tradition arose, but none of it bears the least evidence of trustworthiness. The martyrologies, from which the account of Ignatius' martyrdom that used to appear in uncritical church histories is taken, are full of anachronisms and impossibilities. There are two main types--the Roman and the Syrian--out of which

the others are compounded. They contradict each other in many points and even their own statements in different places are sometimes quite irreconcilable. Any truth that the narrative may contain is hopelessly overlaid with fiction. We are therefore limited to the Epistles for our information, and before we can use even these we are confronted with a most complex critical problem, a problem which for ages aroused the most bitter controversy, but which happily now, thanks to the labors of Zahn, Lightfoot, Harnack and Funk, may be said to have reached a satisfactory solution.

Another modern translation and perhaps the most accessible of Ignatius' letters is the Penguin paperback, *Early Christian Writings*, translated by Maxwell Staniforth. The themes which Ignatius was chiefly concerned about are: 1) the importance of maintaining Christian unity in love and sound doctrine (with warnings against factionalism and the heresy of Docetism-- the belief that Christ was not fully human and did not have a material body or really suffer and die); 2) the role of the clergy as a focus of Christian unity; and, 3) Christian martyrdom as a glorious privilege, eagerly to be grasped.

While these Epistles tell us little of the life of Ignatius, they give us an excellent picture of the man himself, and are a mirror in which we see reflected the ideals of the life and thought of the day of the three themes noted above.

Zeal for martyrdom in later days became a