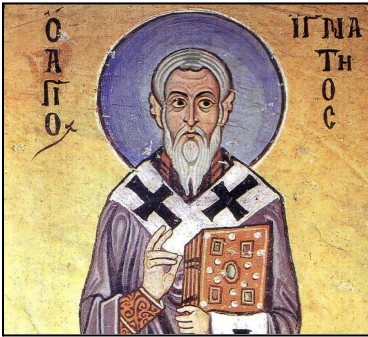


# Saint Ignatius of Antioch



Date of birth: approx 35 A.D.  
Birthplace: ancient Syria  
Date of death: 108 A.D., *martyred*  
Feast Day: October 17

**Patron Saint of: Christian unity; theological studies; the Church in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa**

## About St. Ignatius:

Tradition tells us that Ignatius of Antioch converted to Christianity at a young age. He, along with his friend Polycarp, became disciples of St. John the Apostle. St. Ignatius held the seat of Bishop of Antioch after being consecrated to office by St. Peter.

In 107 A.D., Emperor Trajan demanded Ignatius publicly renounce his faith. Upon Ignatius's refusal, he was sentenced to death by beasts in the Colosseum in Rome. Much of what we know about Ignatius comes from the seven letters he wrote on his way to martyrdom. In his letter to the Church in Rome, he begs the Christians not to stop his martyrdom, saying, "The only thing I ask of you is to allow me to offer the libation of my blood to God. I am the wheat of the Lord; may I be ground by the teeth of the beasts to become the immaculate bread of Christ."

As a Church Father, Ignatius provided crucial testimony to the early Church's Catholic doctrine. He stressed the importance of obedience to bishops and priests, viewing it as essential for maintaining unity. Ignatius strongly cautioned against the sins of schism and division. Notably, he is the earliest known writer to use the term 'Catholic Church', indicating a recognized hierarchy familiar to his readers. Additionally, he underscored the unity found in the Eucharist, denouncing those who denied its true significance as the flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Church has consistently recognized the letters of St. Ignatius as authentic. However, John Calvin, a protestant reformer, challenged their authenticity. He argued that the letters were too closely aligned with Catholic theology to be accepted within protestant beliefs, especially given St. Ignatius's proximity to the Apostles. Despite such claims, critical scholarship has now settled any room for reasonable debate: the letters are authentic. St. Ignatius's writings have profoundly influenced many people, guiding numerous converts towards embracing the Catholic faith.

## A word from Ignatius:

"But avoid all divisions, as the beginning of evils... Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be; as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church."  
*Letter to the Smyrneans*

## Find out more:

**Books:** Epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch  
**Formed.org:** Catholic Saints: St. Ignatius of Antioch

**Youtube:** Mike Aquilina: Ignatius of Antioch