

36// HERE FOLLOWETH THE LIFE OF ST. IGNATIUS, BISHOP

St. Ignatius was disciple of St. John Evangelist, and was bishop of Antioch. And after that, as some say, he sent a letter unto our Lady or an epistle in this wise: Unto Mary the Virgin, that bare Jesu Christ in her body, I, humble Ignatius, her servant, send greeting, I, that am yet a novice in the faith and disciple to Jesu Christ and to John thy dear friend, desire to have of thee some comfort and consolation of some good enseignment and teaching. For of Jesus thy Son I have heard say many marvels, of which I am enjoyed to hear only of thee, which hast been always in his company. Thou knowest well the secret desires of him, thou hast been plainly informed, and they that be yet young in the faith with me trust much to be endoctrined of thee, and informed in their creance and belief: Lady, God salute thee.

And to this letter answered the glorious Virgin Mary in this manner: Ignatius, good disciple of Jesus and his special friend, the humble handmaid of Jesu Christ sendeth to thee greeting. I do thee to wit [know] that all that John hath said to thee of Jesu Christ and all that thou hast learned of him is true doctrine and thing certain. Go alway in good creance [belief], and believe and keep firmly the promise of thy Christian faith, and do thy works according to the same. I shall come with St. John for to visit thee and other Christian men with thee. Hold thee always well in the faith and in good works, and let no persecution ne adversity that thou shalt suffer move thee from thy faith ne from thy creance, but have solace and affiance [faith] in Jesu Christ thy Saviour. This was the answer of his letter.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. IGNATIUS

St. Ignatius was a man right well learned, and the third bishop after St. Peter, the apostle of the Church of Antioch, and much desired to be a martyr for the faith of Jesu Christ. It happed that Trajan, which was emperor of Rome, passed by Antioch, to whom Ignatius showed to him and blamed of this, that he persecuted Christian men, wherefor the emperor did him to be taken and put in irons, and in that wise by ten knights to be led to Rome. There he was presented tofore the emperor and all the senators of Rome, and was constrained by promises, by menaces, and by torments, many and great an horrible, for to adore the idols. St. Ignatius showed to them clearly that their gods had been thieves, ribalds, and men of abominable and evil life, and that they were damned in hell, and that they had been in great error in this, that of so cursed men they made their gods and worshipped devils, and had forsaken God which had made and created all the world, and his blessed Son which in human nature had redeemed and saved the world.

Ignatius is said as one suffering fire and burning, for he was embraced and all esprised of the divine and burning love of God.

Finably, after this, that he had been tormented by fire, and by beating and prison, the emperor did send for the Romans in a place and there did do set St. Ignatius, and did do bring thither two lions for to devour him. But he had never dread for death ne for other torments, of which he had suffered many, but was always comforted for to die for the love of Jesu Christ.

And he said at the last: I am wheat of Jesu Christ, which ought to be grounden between the teeth of these beasts, by which I may be pure bread for to be presented to my Lord.

And anon the lions came and strangled him without tearing of his flesh, or anything hurting it, wherefor Trajan had great marvel and departed from the place.

THE MIRACLE OF HIS HEART

It is read that St. Ignatius in all his torments and all the pains of martyrdom that he suffered, that his tongue never ceased to name the name of Jesus, and when they that tormented him demanded him wherefore he named this name so oft, he answered: Know ye for certain that I have in my heart this name written, and therefore I may not leave to name this name oft.

And because hereof, when he was dead, they that heard these words opened his body and drew out his heart and cut it open, and they found within the name of Jesus written with fair letters of gold, for which miracle many received the faith of Jesu Christ.

ST. BERNARD'S REMARKS ON ST. IGNATIUS

Of this saint saith St. Bernard upon the psalm, *Qui habitat* [i.e. Ps. 15]: St. Ignatius, martyr of God glorious, is of great merit, which was minister to the disciple that Jesus so much loved, and in his epistles, the which he sent to the glorious Virgin Mary, he saluted her as mother that had borne Jesu Christ and she resaluted him again, in sign that he was a person of great honour, of great dignity, and of great authority. The body of whom was honorably buried of Christian men, to the worship of Jesu Christ which is blessed *in secula seculorum*. Amen.

The [iconography of this saint](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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