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Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

Image by Christine Sponchia

MEMORIAL OF ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, BISHOP AND MARTYR

By Sr. Christine Hilliard, CSJ

An Excerpt from Today's First Reading

Brothers and sisters: I am not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek.

ROMANS 1:16

Reflection

Ignatius, whose feast is celebrated today, was the Bishop of Antioch in the ancient kingdom of Syria (now Turkey) for almost 40 years. He is remembered as one of the leading early Christian writers. During the reign of Emperor Trajan [98-117 CE], Ignatius, an influential witness to the Christian faith, publicly refused to worship Roman gods. He was arrested and sentenced to be fed to wild beasts in the Colosseum in Rome. This elder churchman was put in

chains as if he were a dangerous criminal. Ten soldiers were assigned to guard him during the long sea voyage from Antioch to Rome. When the ship stopped at various ports along the way, Christians of the city came to greet him. While en route from Antioch to Rome, Ignatius wrote a series of seven letters to these various church communities he had just met. This correspondence now forms a central part of a collection of works known to be authored by the “Apostolic Fathers.”

In today's First Reading, Paul reminds believers that the Word of God is not just a system of thought or a simple written message. Rather it is a power for salvation and life for all people. Recall the word of God in Genesis. What happened as “God said. . .”? For Christians, a key image for Jesus is “the Word” that “in the beginning . . . was with God . . . was God” (John 1:1) He lives and moves for others in the power of salvation and life as God’s dynamic Word.

Ignatius of Antioch is considered to be one of the three most important writers of his time together with Clement of Rome and Polycarp of Smyrna. Significant topics his letters addressed were ecclesiology (the meaning and structure of church) and the role of bishops. Part of his ministry was using his own words – based on his understanding of Scripture as well as his relationship with God – to offer strengthening nourishment for his faith community ... even as he was on his way to a gruesome death in the Colosseum in Rome.



For Prayer

*I will never stop thanking you, God,
with constant words of praise.*

*My soul boasts of you;
the poor hear me and are glad.*

*God, I invite all creation to praise your words,
together we tell of your name.*

*I asked and you spoke,
you freed me from all my fears.*

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