



## Dear Friends

In anticipation of All Saints' Tide, I am writing today about St Ignatius, second Bishop of Antioch, who is commemorated today and who was sentenced during the Roman Emperor Trajan's reign to be devoured by wild beasts in about 107 AD.

Ignatius was arrested in Syria and transported to Rome for his punishment. On this long and arduous journey Ignatius travelled through Asia Minor, and stopped at Phrygia and Smyrna. As news spread of his arrest and journey, he received visits by prominent Christians, including Polycarp. He wrote letters to the Churches of each area he passed through, and also wrote to the Christians in Rome informing them of his impending arrival. Rev Barry Goodwin spoke to us yesterday of our journey to Christian faith and here we have an example of such a journey which in this case would end in death.

Ignatius was convinced of the need for unity in the Church, and he encouraged this whenever he could. He saw this unity as ideally illustrated in relationships between bishops of the Church. He emphasized the need for constant community worship and celebration of the Eucharist. His letters reveal him to be a man completely devoted to Christ and passionate for unity. I think we can all agree with this.

Ignatius was also keen to receive martyrdom, and in his letters he emphasized that on no account was anyone to attempt to prevent his death. For him, martyrdom was the ultimate imitation of Christ, and a gift from God. Although there is no account of his martyrdom it is widely assumed that he died upon the completion of his journey at Rome. We don't need to follow this example as we have an obligation to continue in this life by following Jesus' earthly ministry in encouraging others to come to God. We await our call to glory in God's own time!

Ignatius called Christians 'fellow travellers' 'bearers of God' and 'Christ-bearers' and emphasizes whole-hearted devotion to Christ: 'Even the things you do in the flesh are spiritual, for you do all things in union with Jesus Christ.' This then is the take-away message here – that we are fellow travellers along our journey to God in Jesus Christ.

(Adapted from *Saints on Earth: A biographical companion to Common Worship* by John H Darch and Stuart K Burns.)

Let us pray:

Feed us, O Lord, with the living bread  
and make us drink deep of the cup of salvation  
that, following the teaching of your bishop Ignatius  
and rejoicing in his faith,  
we may be nourished for that eternal life  
for which he longed;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, Amen.

Alison Radford