

***Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time***  
***February 8, 2026***  
***Year of the Church in History***

*“Let none of you bear a grudge against his neighbor.”*  
*(Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Trallians, circa A.D. 107-110)*

The next epistle of Saint Ignatius of Antioch we shall reflect upon was his Letter to the Trallians. As prior, we begin with a historical overview. The town of Tralles was located about seventeen miles east of Magnesia. The Bishop of Tralles, Polybius, had gone to support Saint Ignatius in Smyrna. In his letter, Saint Ignatius promotes unity and obedience to the Bishop, Presbyters and Deacons who are trying to protect them. Many of these early Christians were unaware of the spreading dangers encouraged from ill-conceived notions of God such as the heresy of Docetism. According to The History of The Church: A Complete Course (the Didache Series, Midwest Theological Forum) maintained:

“Jesus was not truly human and did not suffer the pain of crucifixion and death. The name of the heresy derives from the Greek word *dokesis*, meaning appearance or semblance. It often taught that someone else (e.g., Judas Iscariot or Simon of Cyrene) miraculously switched places with Christ just before the crucifixion and suffered death in Christ’s place.”

Before we go any further, please remember there is no Bible nor Catechism at this point in Christian history. Saint Ignatius, as well as other early Church Fathers, are having to pray, study and reflect upon questions whose answers have not been offered. Literally, they have to conceive the inconceivable and explain this in logical terms for as many to understand as could. Saint Ignatius, and others, are the first ones who will begin to define Jesus Christ as we know Him today: He is fully God and fully man.

*“But if it were as certain persons who are godless, that is unbelievers, say, that He suffered only in semblance, being themselves mere semblance, why am I in bonds?” (paragraph #10)*

Let us focus on those last five words. “*Why am I in bonds?*” I ask, if Jesus was only a semblance of a man who did not suffer for us, then why? Why would we ever believe God loves us when love demands suffering? If God, Jesus, did not suffer for you and me, then why are we even here? None of this matters for God cannot understand suffering found within the heart of man. We may, as later generations too often do, look to this earlier generation and wonder why they are so ill-informed? A later generation may also look at our own and think similar thoughts. Saint Ignatius wanted those early Christians to know God loved them and died for them. It is the thought of this true reality which could inspire them to live a life worthy of their Baptism. Instead of speaking on this subject as it pertains to our own beliefs and feelings, I would like to read something to you which might serve to move your heart, and mine, toward a deeper appreciation of what God, Jesus, did for all of us on that Day. It will be taken from the book entitled: The School of Jesus Crucified by Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus, Passionist.

“Son, for thy sake I have sacrificed My life on a cross, amidst the most fearful sufferings and tortures; can I then be requiring too much when I ask thee sometimes to remember all I have done for thee; sometimes to call to mind My Passion? Can a Father ask less of thee, O son, a Father who for love of thee has suffered and died, was most cruelly transfixed with nails, and breathed His last, plunged in a sea of sorrows? I ask thee not for thy blood, although I shed

every drop of Mine for the love of thee. I ask thee not to endure the scourge, to which also I submitted for thy sake. I ask thee not for the sacrifice of thy love, for the salvation of thy soul. No, My son. I ask thee but to pause a moment, to contemplate My suffering, covered with wounds, and dying on the Cross; to contemplate Me in the state to which I am reduced by My ardent desire of thy salvation. I ask of thee a thought, a feeling of love, a sigh, a tear of compassion at the sight of My countless sufferings; can thy heart, O My son, be so hardened and unfeeling as to refuse thy tender Father, thy loving Redeemer, this slight tribute of gratitude—the occasional recollection of My Passion? Canst thou so liberally bestow thy thoughts and affections upon the world, upon creatures, and upon thy own interests, and yet refuse Me even a sigh, or a feeling of love and sympathy?”

My family, if we held this thought of the sufferings of Jesus in our mind, would we not also joyfully want to wear those same bonds Saint Ignatius of Antioch endured?