

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time (English)
Quinquagesima (Latin)
February 15, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“As children therefore [of the light] of the truth, shun division and wrong doctrines; and where the shepherd is, there follow ye as sheep.”
(Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Philadelphians, circa A.D. 107-110)

As he traveled through the city of Troas on his way to martyrdom in Rome, Saint Ignatius of Antioch composed his Letter to the Philadelphians. As prior, we begin with a historical overview. The history of the city of Philadelphia begins with its founding by King Eugenius II in 189 B.C. It was named for his brother Attalus II, nicknamed “*Philadelphus*” which stands for “*brotherly love*.” It is mentioned by Saint John in the Book of Revelation. The modern-day Turkish city of Alasehir, in the Manisa Province, sits upon its remains. In his letter, Saint Ignatius again promotes unity and obedience to the Bishop, Presbyters and Deacons. He promotes this unity against two factions which are dividing the early church community: those who promote a Jewish/Christian hybrid faith and those who promote Docetism.

“But where there is division and anger, there God abideth not.” (paragraph #8)

“Be ye careful therefore to observe one eucharist (for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup unto union in His blood; there is one altar of sacrifice, as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons my fellow-servants), that whatsoever ye do, ye may do it after God.” (paragraph #4)

Saint Ignatius would stress two key points of reflection to refute those who offered different interpretations of Christianity. The first is God is not found in division. The second, the one eucharist which comes from the one altar of sacrifice through the bishop. These two points express one true reality for Saint Ignatius; the unity within the Christian Church is solely due to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit animates, gives life, to the Church just as our soul animates our body.

Let us reflect upon how this unity under the Holy Spirit was expressed in the ancient Christian community. Let us ask ourselves this question: “Was the celebration of the one Eucharist upon the altar of sacrifice the same as it is today?” We can answer that with both yes and no. The form of worship has changed slightly and we will see this as we read later Fathers, but the Eucharist is still the same. This is found in the way Saint Ignatius writes. He speaks of sacrifice. The Eucharist is and has always been understood as a sacrifice. We can read throughout the Bible of sacrifices used to ratify covenants. One may recall Abraham offering a ram instead of his son Issac as a sacrifice. This was viewed as a righteous act for it proved Abraham’s belief in the covenant between God and himself

concerning descendants. We can read about Moses sprinkling the children of Abraham with the blood of the sacrifice to seal their decision to follow the laws of God (Commandments). We can read how sacrifices were essential to the worship of God found in the Temple because they reminded those involved of God's never-failing promise in their covenant relationship. The Eucharist offered in the early church reminded these Christians of their part in this ongoing relationship. They were just as important to God as their Jewish ancestors. And, each time they participated in the one Eucharist, they renewed their own commitment to adhere to what God offered them, their salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. The Eucharist, as Saint Ignatius is laying our Christian foundation, is the new way Jesus wants us to worship God and be united with God. How do we know this? Because He said: "Do this (the Eucharist) in remembrance of Me (His Sacrifice/New Covenant)."