

**Third Sunday of Lent**  
**March 8, 2026**  
**Year of the Church in History**

*“I have no delight in the food of corruption or in the delights of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Christ who was of the seed of David; and for a draught I desire His blood, which is love incorruptible.”*

*(Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Romans, circa A.D. 107-110)*

We now come to the close of the Epistles of Saint Ignatius of Antioch. This weekend we shall reflect upon the last of his seven letters, his Epistle to the Romans. Christian history teaches; Saint Ignatius would write this letter to serve as both an introduction as to who he is and offer guidance as to his desire to be martyred for Christ. The latter is important as Saint Ignatius explains: *“Even though I myself, when I am with you, should beseech you, obey me not; but rather give credence to these things which I write to you”* (paragraph #7).

*“The Work is not of persuasiveness, but Christianity is a thing of might, whensoever it is hated by the world”* (paragraph #3).

*“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also”* (John 15:18-20).

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, destined to offer his life as a sacrifice to God, writes this beautiful sentence referring to Christianity as a *“thing of might, whensoever it is hated by the world.”* At first glance, one might assume Saint Ignatius wrote this line affirming his own strength in Jesus. Yet, as one reads this Epistle, Saint Ignatius can be seen as a man relying not on his own strength, but humbly seeking the power of Jesus to complete this final Christian act of love. His personality can be clearly seen as he tells the Christians of Rome that he will offer no resistance to the animals and, if they show no interest in him, then he will seek to entice them. He greatly wants to offer himself as a sacrifice to God for all that God has done for him. *“Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can attain unto God. I am God’s wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that they may become my sepulcher and may leave no part of my body behind, so that I may not, when I am fallen asleep, be burdensome to any one”* (paragraph #4).

As we have read through and reflected upon the Epistles of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, one thing looms in the background: Suffering. Saint Ignatius writes as he willingly goes forward to suffer for Jesus and His Bride, the Church. His Epistles should offer us an affirmation in our own suffering. In his book, Suffering: The Catholic

Answer, Dom Hubert van Zeller would write: *“Suffering is powerless to extinguish the happiness that is conditioned by faith and hope. Why? Because faith and hope are evidence of the love that accepts the essential condition of being obedient to God’s will”* (p. 5). Saint Ignatius knew, as he wrote these Epistles, God was not the cause of his suffering. Man/Mankind, beginning with the disobedience of Adam, has been the cause of his own suffering. God originally and through Jesus His Son, has provided mankind with rules, which when followed, leads man into Happiness with Him. Man/Mankind, in our arrogance, too often placed those rules aside thinking we knew a better or easier path. Through his witness and martyrdom, Saint Ignatius desires to teach those Christians who would be present, that we suffer with Jesus who suffered first for us. His act of martyrdom is an act of thanksgiving for the love God has shown to Him. Suffering for Love is the ultimate act of love in the mind of Saint Ignatius. Another Christian, Saint Cyprian of Carthage, would later write: *“How grave is the case of a Christian if, as a servant, he is unwilling to suffer when his master first suffered! How serious it is that we should be unwilling to suffer for our own sins, when he who had no sin of his own suffered for us!”* (Letter 55:6-7). My family, offer your daily sufferings for love of Him and for love of all of His children. In this way, we will surely be known as children of Our Father.