

A sketch of the life and martyrdom of Ignatius who willingly sealed the testimony of ^{our noble} Jesus with his
blood. We are not informed from whom this celebrated martyr was descended; nor what country
gave him birth. Some suppose, he was the little child whom our blessed Saviour placed
in midst of his disciples; when he told them; 'except ye be converted &c. But the authenticity
of this story has been denied, particularly, by Chrysostom who maintains that he never
saw Jesus, nor conversed with him. It is universally admitted, that he was a disciple of St.
John; but no accounts of his early years have reached us. His eminence as a zealous Chris-
tian, and one well qualified to instruct others, sufficiently appears, from his having been
chosen bishop of the church at Antioch by the apostles. In this office he continued forty years,
and adorned the doctrines of his Saviour in all things. The leading features of this great
man's character, was humility; for while others regarded his knowledge, and piety with un-
feigned admiration; he embraced every opportunity of confessing his own unworthiness,
and acknowledging his great sense of the divine mercy. In one of his letters, he says, I do
not dictate to you as a person of any consequence; for I now begin to be a disciple, and speak to
you as my teachers. I ought to be sustained by you in faith, in admonition, in patience, in long-suffering
again I am even ashamed to be reckoned as one of them, for neither am
I worthy, being the least among them, and as one born out of due season. How beautifully does
this meek and lowly spirit of this noble martyr agree with our Redeemer's commands, to esteem
ourselves as unprofitable servants, and how contrary to that elated spirit of vainglory so
prevalent among men. We have ^{particular} no account of his life during this long period he labored for the
church at Antioch

While the fury of the Domitian's persecution raged, we are informed that ^{he} continued instant
in prayer and fasting, carefully watching over those who were weak in faith, and ready
to sink, in this season of trial. When the church was again restored to peace on the accession
of Nerva, the soul of this saint rejoiced in her prosperity, although he ardently desired to die
for the sake of Christ. The earnest aspiration of Ignatius for the crown of martyrdom, beautiful
and affectionate, as they are, appear to have been carried to excess: and in this, he did not imi-
tate the examples of the apostles, who employed every lawful means for the preserva-
tion of their lives. For he fearful lest his life should be prolonged, thus; addresses his women
brethren, I beseech you, make no unreasonable combination on my account; leave me to be
food for wild beasts, through which I may attain God — I eagerly wish the Lions to be
prepared for me, and pray that they may be found ready against me; but should they
they not be inclined when I am willing, I shall even assault them with violence. But
while the too great anxiety of Ignatius may be condemned, his zeal for the cause of his medes, and
willingness to seal his testimony with his blood, cannot be sufficiently admired. The very
spirit of Christian love, and self-devotion, characterizes the whole of his epistles, and could indeed
must that heart be, while perusing them, which does not catch a spark of the divine flame.
The ardent desire of this excellent man to attain a heavenly crown, was at length granted
him under Trajan. That Emperor, in the tenth year of his reign, visited Antioch, and being elated
by the pride of previous conquests, deemed the firmness of Christians in refusing

to offer sacrifice, an insult deserving of punishment. The venerable Bishop, anxious to avert the storm which threatened his beloved flock, voluntarily presented himself before the Emperor. When Trajan beheld Ignatius, he exclaimed, what impious spirit art thou, both to transgress our commands, and to ensnare others into the same folly, to their destruction. Ignatius answered, Theophorus (meaning himself) ought not to be called so, forasmuch as all evil spirits are departed from all the servants of God. ^{He} Trajan asked, who is Theophorus? Ignatius answered, He who bears Christ in his breast. Trajan having put a few more questions to him pronounced the following sentence against him. That he should be carried to great Rome, there to be thrown to wild beasts for the entertainment of the people. This barbarous sentence far from intimidating the martyr filled his soul with joy. I thank thee Lord he exclaimed, that thou has vouchsafed to honour me with a perfect love towards thee and has made me to put on iron chains, with the apostle Paul. Then he cheerfully put on his chains, and after fervently commending his church to the mercy, and protection of God, he calmly yielded himself a prisoner to his cruel and ferocious guards. They adopted every method to add ^{the length of} to his painful voyage. but neither the length of the voyage nor the fetters which bound his aged limbs, the inhumanity of his savage guards, shook the firm soul of Ignatius. Instead of showing the direct passage to Rome from Seleucia, whither he had been conducted on foot, put him on board a vessel which was to coast the southern and western parts of Asia minor. On his arrival at Smyrna, he once more beheld Polycarp bishop of that city. The pleasure afforded by this interview to these

affectionate brothers in Christ, may be more easily conceived than described. The latter far from being dismayed by the sight of Ignatius' bonds, rejoiced in them, and earnestly exhorted him to persevere. Remaining sometime here, the church and cities of Asia, to testify their esteem for the bishop of Antioch, sent deputies to attend and console him. During his abode here, he addressed epistles to other churches, from which the steadfast belief of this eminent church father in the leading doctrines of christianity evidently appears. They are pervaded by a spirit of faith, meekness, and charity which must delight, while they edify the mind of every humble believer. Of the cruel treatment he experienced during this painful, long, and tedious ^{journey} from Syria to Puteoli, we may judge from a passage in one of his epistles. From Spain even to Rome, by land and sea, day and night, I fight with wild beasts, being held captive by ten Leo-
nards, who even when used gently become more ferocious. From Puteoli, they again embarked, and soon arrived at Ostia, which is only sixteen miles from Rome. Impatient of delay, and fearful of being too late for the games, his keepers granted him no rest, but hurried him on to the scene where his sufferings, and their cruelty were forever to terminate. Many of the Roman christians on learning his approach, left the city, and advanced to meet him. The joy they experienced on beholding a man so eminently distinguished, was embittered by the remembrance of the cruel death to which he was condemned. When they ventured to intimate their feelings to Ignatius, and to express their anxiety for his preservation, he commanded them no

to silent, and to show a true love for him, discharging yet more with them than he
had done in his epistle, and persuading them not to exhort ^{any} him, who were ready to be
the Lord. His resolutions thus continued firm he was conducted to Rome and proceed to the proper
of the city. He renounce his punishment more shaming, he was appointed to be led to execution, the day
on which one of the most solemn Roman vestments was exhibited. It is related, that when he had
at length overcome the affectionate entreaties of friends, to permit their questions for his re-
cuse: "he knelt down with them, and prayed to the son of God in behalf of the Church,
that he would put a stop to the persecutions, and continue the love of the brethren to all
other. ^{After} which he was then led into the amphitheatre, and soon exposed to the
wild beasts. He wish he so ardently expressed, that the flame might become his
fuel, as he was granted, for no remains were left, save a few bones, which were
carefully gathered up by his friends, and conveyed to Antioch. The noble army
of Martyrs does not amount to our view one more eminently endowed with the gifts
of the Holy Spirit, than Ignatius. So that in him was not merely a call spent to the love
of the gospel, but an active living principle, from which the virtues exhibited in his
life arose. The Christian grows which adorned his character, proceeds from his
adherent feeling of the Christian doctrine. He knew the depravity of his own
nature, his want of a passion to receive him from the vain knowledge of men

and reconcile him to God; he therefore embraced with joy the offer of salvation through Jesus, and acknowledge him as his Lord and King. The effects of his blessed choice appeared in his unwearied zeal to promote the cause of his divine Master, in his humility, meekness, patience, long-suffering and charity, towards his enemies; in his anxiety to reclaim the wicked, strengthen believers, that they might abound more and more to the praise and glory of God; and finally in imitation of Christ, in his offering himself a willing victim for the safety of the church. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them. The year in which Aquinas glorified God by his death, is not exactly ascertained, but is generally supposed to have taken place in the year of the Lord 107