

Bio for
Ignatius
The First or Second Bishop of Antioch
(AD ??? – ~107)

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- Ignatius was a pupil of John the Apostle, making him one of the Apostolic Fathers.
 - He was the first or second bishop of Antioch after Peter.¹
 - Eusebius says that the first bishop of Antioch was Evodius.
 - Another source says that it was Ignatius, although this may be because Evodius was less known.
- Little is known about him except what can be learned from his letters and a few minor comments from Irenaeus and Origen.
- He also went by the name of Theophorus, “God-Bearer”.
- Legend holds that he was the little child who was placed on Jesus’ lap in Mt 18. While this is probably not true,² it does indicate that he was probably a child during Jesus’ ministry.
- On his journey as a prisoner from Antioch to Rome, he wrote numerous letters.
 - The seven usually agreed to be authentic are:
 - Letter to the Ephesian Church
 - Letter to the Magnesians³ Church
 - Letter to the Trallians⁴ Church
 - Letter to the Roman Church
 - Letter to the Philadelphian Church
 - Letter to the Smyrnaean Church
 - Letter to Polycarp
 - The letters were written in Greek, but exist today in short and long Greek versions and in Syriac. The short versions are usually considered the authentic ones.
 - He defended meeting on Sundays instead of on the Sabbath.
 - He did not seem to consider Rome as authoritative. Unlike the New Testament or Clement, he distinguishes between bishops and elders, but makes no mention of priests.
 - He is one of the first to use the term *Ευχαριστία*, *Eucharist*, “Thanksgiving”, in referring to the remembrance of the Last Supper. As in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, this event was synonymous with a love-feast.
 - He is the first to use the term *καθολικός*, *Catholic*, “Universal”, Church but defines it as “where Jesus Christ is.”
- He probably died in Rome in ~AD 107 (or possibly ~AD 116), being fed to wild beasts by Emperor Trajan.

¹ Peter is believed to have served there before moving on to Rome. (See Gal 2:11-14.)

² The legend may have come about from a mistranslation of Theophorus as “God-Borne”, that is, “sitting on God’s lap”.

³ Magnesia was a city near Ephesus.

⁴ Tralles was a city on the Aegean Sea.

Sources:

<http://www.earlychurch.org.uk>

<http://ccl.org/ccl/schaff/anf01.html>

http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/history/church_fathers.htm