

“ for just as there are two coinages, the one of God, and the other of the world, and each has its own stamp impressed on it, unbelievers that of this world, believers (with love) the stamp of God the Father through Jesus Christ; and unless we voluntarily choose to die in relation to his passion, his life is not in us.”

St. Ignatius of Antioch, to the Magnesians

We Are Sealed and Stamped by God the Father through Jesus Christ!

The Patron saint of our honorable Order wrote his pastoral letters as he was heading to Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire, on his way to martyrdom. St. Ignatius is not an intellectual philosopher who dealt with spiritual issues on a rational scale, as we sometimes do. His short letters are radiated with love for Jesus Christ who came to our world in order to save us.

We, as members of the holy church, are bonded with the Lord, Jesus Christ, through our baptism and the Holy Eucharist. The Christian believer inherits the gift of the resurrection when he/she makes the right choice and when the human person becomes sealed by the Spirit of God. We become alive with Christ, and we share in His death and resurrection. While we are subject to death, we are capable also to embrace the gift of eternal life from our resurrected Lord. As members and partakers of the death and resurrection of Christ, Baptism pulls away the old man of corruption and sin, renewing in us the image of the risen Lord.

In this regard, we can say that Orthodox theology is pastoral par excellence. Orthodox theological perspectives are **incarnational**; they are not speculative or theoretical enterprise. Our life is revealed in Christ and is not reduced to

a ritual or to a lip service. In his short epistles, St. Ignatius reminded the faithful believers to be Christ-like, and he taught them that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God. This teaching transcends any given promise.. For we, indeed, become alive with Christ and in Baptism we gain the power of the resurrection, putting on the garment of salvation.

Therefore, regardless of the relations that we build between us and our communal and limited connections in this world, whether at home, in the market place, or in our involvements with the secular world, we are called to be heavenly. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit we establish this nostalgia that enables us to become alive in Christ and born in a world that is restored and renewed by God. We are invited to translate our faith in Him, throughout our personal and public life, enlightened by His grace.

When we live as Christ-like then we do not experience an identity crisis; in fact we begin to nurture life as a gift and we live our potentials from the spiritual, moral, and human perspectives, and search for a genuine identity which reflects the image and likeness of God in us.

Our patron Saint Ignatius left for us a treasure which we sometimes take it for granted. Clergy and laity alike, who have taken a life-time pledge to follow the footsteps of St. Ignatius, can be grateful for their membership; for it gives them an opportunity to emulate what the Lord had given us. Today there are some who are ignorant of Him and deny Him. As for us believers, we have a sacred task. 'Let your baptism,' writes St. Ignatius, 'serve as a shield, faith as a helmet, love as a spear, endurance as full armor. Your works are your deposits so that you may receive the full sum due

you. Therefore be patient with one another in gentleness, as God is with you. May I always have joy in you.' St. Ignatius to Polycarp.

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