

Abiding in the True Vine

Name: _____

Saint Ignatius of Antioch had stern directives for how Christians should engage with those who were false teachers or might draw us away from the faith: “Flee, then, these wicked offshoots, which produce deadly fruit. If a man taste of it, he dies outright.”¹ His language seems to resonate with Jesus’ own words, given to the Apostles at the Last Supper.

Jn 15:5-6

15 ⁵“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.”

How do the two teachings (from Jesus and Saint Ignatius) relate?

Answers may include Jesus saying we bear fruit only when united to him and that those who are detached from him are “wicked offshoots” who bear “deadly fruit.”

We should strive to remain united to Christ and detach ourselves regularly from whatever leads us away from him. Take a few moments to consider what might be keeping you from a closer relationship with him.

Saint Ignatius said we should “flee” whatever would lead us away from Christ. We might not be called to die for the faith, as he was, but we all must “die to self” and eliminate from our lives all that might pull us away from God.

How are you being called to “die to self” to be united to Christ more fully?

Answers may vary.

¹ Early Christian Fathers, ed. and trans. Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Collier, 1970), 100.

Bearing Wrongs Patiently

Name: _____

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The spiritual works of mercy are actions to care for the spiritual needs of others: counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish the sinner, comfort the sorrowful, forgive injuries, bear wrongs patiently, and pray for the living and the dead. Saint Ignatius of Antioch lived many of those well, but he is especially known for bearing wrongs patiently.

Reread the passage from Saint Ignatius' *Letter to the Romans* on page 39 of the Student Text.

As Ignatius was being taken to Rome for martyrdom, he knew he would be killed, and he wrote to the Christians in Rome, begging them not to do anything to stop his martyrdom. He could have asked them to attempt to rescue him, but instead he begged them to let him be killed as a martyr.

When we are wronged, it is so easy to want to strike back, defend ourselves, or get revenge. However, we are called to bear wrongs patiently, like Ignatius. Most of us will not be called to bear wrongs patiently to the heroic extent of letting people kill us for our faith, as he did.

For us, it is more likely we are called to bear wrongs patiently when others misunderstand us, gossip about us, or exclude us. It takes prudence to discern which wrongs we can bear patiently and which ones we must stand up against.

What is a specific situation or relationship in your life that you could bear this week with greater patience and charity?

Answers may vary.

How can you rely more fully on Jesus when dealing with difficulty this week?

Answers may vary.
