

## Weekly Musing † October 17, 2011

Those of you who were in church last weekend know that I preached on St. Luke, our patron saint. The gist of my sermon had to do with his uniqueness in what he contributes to our picture of Jesus Christ. He is the author of the parable of the Prodigal Son and of Dives and Lazarus. He pays particular attention to women and he portrays a Christ who is compassionate towards outcasts. Lastly, he gives us the Road to Emmaus story of the Resurrection, a beautiful story which I suspect speaks to many of us.

Today is the feast day of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch and Martyr (115 A.D.) One of the great sins of modern Christianity is to convince people that there is essentially one model of being a good Christian. Often this model is designed to fit well into our modern lifestyle and family. Would that life were so simple. When one reads of the concerns of Ignatius of Antioch, one hears something very different than concerns about the economy and the perils of raising teenagers.



*Fresco of St. Ignatius*

In his letter to the Romans, Ignatius says:

“What a thrill I shall have from the wild beasts that are ready for me! I hope they will make short work of me . . . . Forgive me -- I know what is good for me. Now is the moment I am beginning to be a disciple. May nothing seen or unseen begrudge me making my way to Jesus Christ . . . only let me get to Jesus Christ! Not the wide bounds of earth nor the kingdoms of this world will avail me anything.” (Early Christian Fathers, edited by Cyril Richardson). The italics are mine. This seemingly calamitous unhappiness is for him the beginning of his discipleship. Take that, “prosperity gospel.”

Ignatius was bishop of Antioch, one of the most important churches of the time. Eventually Antioch was a patriarchate along with Alexandria, Jerusalem and Constantinople. The patriarchs of those places in consortium were the hierarchical head of the church in the East, not Rome. In an attempt to wipe out the Christian religion, the Romans decided to take a prominent leader of Christianity and have him tortured and killed in the arena at Rome. It took a long while to make it to Rome from Antioch and along the way Ignatius was visited by many people from the Eastern Church and wrote still extant letters to those churches. They give us a wealth of information about the church of the time. Sometimes when I fret about attendance or money or whatever, I find it strangely refreshing to read these letters even though at the end of them, Ignatius will be cruelly killed.

*Russian icon 1600s*

This particularly intense kind of Christianity that involves martyrdom is off-putting to most modern Christians, but there it is, an historical surety in this and many other periods of history. It would be easy to dismiss these people as fanatics but when you read their vibrant sense of the gospel it is hard to dismiss them so easily.



## News from St. Luke's

Thanks to all who helped with clean up day this Sunday. A special thanks to Dr. Laura Rathe for donating five upscale plungers so we can have one in each of our bathrooms. Compared to days gone by this is unimaginable luxury. She also made the chile.

Remember in November, we will be collecting money for the Dress-A Child program. This is an important program in a society where more and more children live in poverty. Also, it is what Christ wants us to do, reason enough for many programs.

Our youth group looks like it is forming its own 4H club. 4H is about a lot more than cows and chickens these days. The youth group meets Wednesday at 6 pm. Bring a friend.

*The Rev. Canon Gary Waddingham  
Rector, St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
Regional Canon, Diocese of Montana*

