October 17th: Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr

Gospel text (*Jn* 12:24-26): Jesus said to his disciples: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit..."

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, martyr and bishop (c. 35-108)

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today we will be speaking of St Ignatius, who was the third Bishop of Antioch (70 to 107). He was sent from Syria to Rome, and became food for wild beasts on account of his testimony about Christ. And as he made the journey through Asia, he fortified the parishes in the various cities where he stopped with homilies and exhortations. In reading his letters one feels the freshness of the faith of the generation which had still known the Apostles. No Church Father has expressed the longing for union with Christ and for life in Him with the intensity of Ignatius.

Ignatius' irresistible longing for union with Christ was the foundation of a real “mysticism of unity”. For Ignatius unity was first and foremost a prerogative of God, who, since he exists as Three Persons, is One in absolute unity. It is possible to grasp in the Letters of Ignatius a sort of dialectic between two characteristic aspects of Christian life: the hierarchical structure of the Ecclesial Community, and the fundamental unity that binds all the faithful in Christ.

—Ignatius is truly the “Doctor of Unity”: unity of God and unity of Christ, unity of the Church, unity of the faithful in “faith and love, to which nothing is to be preferred” (Saint Ignatius of Antioch).