October 23rd: Saint Ignatius of Constantinople, bishop

Gospel text (*Jn* 15:9-17): Jesus said to his disciples: “As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love.

“I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another.”

“I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father”

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
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Today, Christianity, both Eastern and Western, celebrates Saint Ignatius of Constantinople (799-877), a shepherd who lived out the profound words of Jesus: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). Ignatius, son of Emperor Michael I, went from the court to the monastery, and from patriarchal dignity to exile, but at every stage of his life he maintained a single focus: to remain in the love of Christ, just as He Himself asks of us (“Remain in my love”).

The fruit the Lord expects from us springs from obedience to His commandments. Saint Ignatius lived this obedience with heroic integrity. As Patriarch, he sought neither the favor of the powerful nor the comfort of the palace, but fidelity to the Truth. His doctrinal firmness, in a context of tensions and divisions, might have seemed harsh. But, in reality, it was born of a deep love: the desire to remain in the truth so as not to break authentic communion. In the words of Pope Leo, “Truly peaceful relationships cannot be built, apart from truth,” a Truth—moreover—that “is never separated from charity.”

When Ignatius had to choose between pleasing Caesar Bardas or adhering to the moral consistency of the Gospel, he embraced the way of the cross. He was very courageous in rebuking the regent for repudiating his legitimate wife. That decision cost him his position and led to exile—amid insults and

persecution—but at the same time, it confirmed him as a true “friend of the Lord” (cf. Jn 15:15).

Saint Ignatius of Constantinople teaches us that Christian love is not a fleeting emotion, but a firm determination to do God’s will, even when the world turns its back on us. He did not choose himself for glory; it was the Lord who chose him and destined him to go and bear fruit that endures in the history of the Church. Today, Saint Ignatius is remembered for his courage and steadfastness in faith, serving as an inspiration to persecuted Christians.