

## Letter of St. Ignatius to the Magnesians

(Abridged with mixed translation)

### Greeting

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Ignatius, who is also called "*Theophorus*", to the Church at Magnesia, a church blessed with the grace of God the Father through Jesus Christ our Saviour, in whom I salute her. Warmest greetings and good wishes to her in God the Father and in Jesus Christ.

### \* Chapter 1. Reason of writing the epistle

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When I learned of your well-ordered, God-inspired love, I rejoiced greatly, and determined to commune with you in the faith of Jesus Christ. I am privileged to bear a name radiant with divine splendour, and so in my chains I sing the praises of the Churches and pray for union in their midst. This is a union based on the flesh and spirit of Jesus Christ, the constant source of our life; a union based on faith and love – the greatest blessing; and, most especially, a union with Jesus and the Father. If in this union we patiently endure all the abuse of the Prince of this world and escape unscathed, we shall happily make our way to God.

### \* Chapter 2. I rejoice in your messengers

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It has been my privilege to have a glimpse of you all in the person of Damas, your bishop and a man of God, and through your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and through my fellow-servant the deacon Zotion who is obedient to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbyters as to the law of Jesus Christ.

### Chapter 3. Honour your youthful bishop

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Now it becomes you also not to treat your bishop too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield him all reverence, because he embodies the authority of God the Father. This your holy presbyters do, not seeking to profit by your bishop's youthful appearance; no, they are wise in God and therefore defer to him – or rather, not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of all men. It is fitting in honouring God to obey your bishop. He that neglects to do this does not deceive the bishop that is visible, but rather seeks to mock Him that is invisible.

### Chapter 4. Some wickedly act independently of the bishop

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### Chapter 5. Death & Life

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### Chapter 6. Preserve harmony

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I exhort you to do all things with a divine harmony, the bishop is to preside in the place of God, while the presbyters are to function as the council of the Apostles, and the

deacons are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ. Conform yourselves, then – all of you – to God’s ways, and respect one another, and let no one regard his neighbor with the eyes of flesh, but love one another at all times in Jesus Christ. Let there be nothing among you tending to divide you, but be united with the bishop and those who preside over you – serving as an example and evidence of your immortality.

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### **Chapter 7. Do nothing without the bishop and presbyters**

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Just as the Lord, therefore, being one with the Father, did nothing without Him, either by Himself, or through the Apostles, so neither must you undertake anything without the bishop and the presbyters; nor must you attempt to convince yourselves that anything you do apart is acceptable. No; at your meetings there must be one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope in love, in joy that is flawless, that is Jesus Christ, who stands supreme. Therefore run together as into one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father and yet remained with, and returned to, one.

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### **\* Chapter 8. By law and by grace**

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Do not be led astray. If we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace. Why, the Prophets, those men so very near to God, lived in conformity with Christ Jesus. This, too, was the reason why they were persecuted, being inspired by His grace to fully convince the unbelieving world that there is one God, God who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, who is His eternal Word.

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### **Chapter 9. Let us live with Christ**

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### **Chapter 10. Beware of Judaizing**

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It is absurd to profess Christ Jesus, and to live like a Jew. For Christianity did not embrace Judaism, but Judaism Christianity, that so every tongue which believes might be gathered together to God.

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### **\* Chapter 11. I write these things to warn you**

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Now this, dearly beloved, I do not write as though I had learned that any of you were men of that description, but because, as one who is not your superior, I merely wish to warn you beforehand not to yield to the bait of false doctrine. Rather, you should believe most steadfastly in the birth, the Passion, and the Resurrection, which took place during the government of Pontius Pilate, being truly and certainly accomplished by Jesus Christ, who is our hope, from which may none of you ever be turned aside.

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### **Chapter 12. You are superior to me**

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May you be my joy in all respects, if indeed I deserve it! For though I am bound, I am not worthy to be compared to any of you that are at liberty. I know that you are not

conceited, for you have Jesus Christ in you. What is more, I know that when I praise you, you blush, just as the Scripture says: *The just man is his own accuser.*

### **Chapter 13. Be established in faith and unity**

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Be zealous, therefore, to stand squarely on the decrees of the Lord and the Apostles, that in all things whatsoever you may prosper, in body and in soul, in faith and in love, in the Son and the Father and the Spirit, in the beginning and the end, together with your most reverend bishop and with your presbytery – that fittingly woven spiritual crown! – and with your deacons, men of God.

Submit to the bishop and to each other's rights, just as did Jesus Christ in the flesh to the Father, and as the Apostles did to Christ and the Father and the Spirit, so that there may be a union both fleshly and spiritual.

### **\* Chapter 14. Your prayers requested**

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Knowing as I do that you are full of God, I am exhorting you but briefly. Be mindful of me in your prayers, that I may make my way to God. Remember, too, the Church which is in Syria, of which I am an unworthy member. I stand in need of your united prayer in God, and your love, that the Church which is in Syria may be deemed worthy of being refreshed by your Church.

### **Chapter 15. Salutations**

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The Ephesians from Smyrna – the place from which I am writing to you – send their greetings. Like yourselves, they have come here for the glory of God. They have revived my spirits in every way, as does Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna. Farewell – you who, being of one mind with God, possess an unflinching spirit – which is to be like Jesus Christ.