

February 23, 2023

Good Morning!

1. Today's Readings: [Thursday after Ash Wednesday | USCCB](#)

2. The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus: Imagine being able to sit at the feet of the apostles and hear their stories of life with Jesus from their own lips. Imagine walking with those who had walked with Jesus, seen him, and touched him. That was what St. Polycarp was able to do as a disciple of Saint John the Evangelist. Polycarp was a Christian bishop of Smyrna, the modern city of Izmir in Turkey. He was an Apostolic Father, meaning he was a student of one of the original disciples of Christ, in this case St. John the Apostle. He was known to other important figures in the early Christian church, including St. Irenaeus, who knew him as a youth, and St. Ignatius of Antioch, his colleague in the Eastern Catholic Church. Our article today is a written account of his martyrdom and points to the holiness of our saint.

3. Quotes of the Day: Wise words from St. Polycarp

~"Though you do not see Him, you believe, and in believing there is unspeakable joy."

~"Help one another with the generosity of the Lord and despise no one when you have the opportunity to do good, do not let it go by."

~"Let us, therefore, forsake the vanity of the crowd and their false teaching and turn back to the Word delivered to us from the beginning."

St. Polycarp, Pray for Us!

St. Joseph, Pray for Us!

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Linda McCormick
St. Joseph Catholic Church & School
1200 Cornelia Road
Anderson, SC 29621

Phone: (864) 225-5341, ext. 102

Fax: (864) 225-6432

From a Letter on the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp by the Church of Smyrna

A rich and pleasing sacrifice

When the pyre was ready, Polycarp took off all his clothes and loosened his undergarment. He made an effort also to remove his shoes, though he had been unaccustomed to this, for the faithful always vied with each other in their haste to touch his body. Even before his martyrdom he had received every mark of honor in tribute to his holiness of life.

There and then he was surrounded by the material for the pyre. When they tried to fasten him also with nails, he said: "Leave me as I am. The one who gives me strength to endure the fire will also give me strength to stay quite still on the pyre, even without the precaution of your nails". So, they did not fix him to the pyre with nails but only fastened him instead. Bound as he was, with hands behind his back, he stood like a mighty ram, chosen out for sacrifice from a great flock, a worthy victim made ready to be offered to God.

Looking up to heaven, he said: "Lord, almighty God, Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have come to the knowledge of yourself, God of angels, of powers, of all creation, of all the race of saints who live in your sight, I bless you for judging me worthy of this day, this hour, so that in the company of the martyrs I may share the cup of Christ, your anointed one, and so rise again to eternal life in soul and body, immortal through the power of the Holy Spirit. May I be received among the martyrs in your presence today as a rich and pleasing sacrifice. God of truth, stranger to falsehood, you have prepared this and revealed it to me and now you have fulfilled your promise.

"I praise you for all things, I bless you, I glorify you through the eternal priest of heaven, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son. Through him be glory to you, together with him and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen".

When he had said "Amen" and finished the prayer, the officials at the pyre lit it. But, when a great flame burst out, those of us privileged to see it witnessed a

strange and wonderful thing. Indeed, we have been spared in order to tell the story to others. Like a ship's sail swelling in the wind, the flame became as it were a dome encircling the martyr's body. Surrounded by the fire, his body was like bread that is baked, or gold and silver white-hot in a furnace, not like flesh that has been burnt. So sweet a fragrance came to us that it was like that of burning incense or some other costly and sweet-smelling gum.

Source: liturgies.net