

WEDNESDAY 23RD FEBRUARY

Saint Polycarp

Prayer for the Morning

*The love of God was made visible in Jesus Christ:
come, let us give thanks and praise!*

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the
Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and
ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia!*

HYMN

Metre: 11 11 11 11

This hymn can be sung to the tune used for
How Firm a Foundation

Fear not, I am with you, O be not dismayed,
For I am your God and will still give you aid;
I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

When through fiery trials your pathways shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be your supply;
The flame shall not hurt you; I only design
Your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.

PSALM 65

8-14, 16-17

Out of my distress I cried to the Lord and he answered me. (Jon 2: 3)
Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was a disciple of Saint John the Evangelist. In old age, following in the footsteps of his master, he died with courage and dignity, preferring the pain of burning to the pain of abandoning his Lord.

O peoples, bless our God,
let the voice of his praise resound,
of the God who gave life to our souls
and kept our feet from stumbling.

For you, O God, have tested us,
 you have tried us as silver is tried:
 you led us, God, into the snare;
 you laid a heavy burden on our backs.

You let men ride over our heads;
 we went through fire and through water
 but then you brought us relief.

Burnt offering I bring to your house;
 to you I will pay my vows,
 the vows which my lips have uttered,
 which my mouth spoke in my distress.

Come and hear, all who fear God.
 I will tell what he did for my soul:
 to him I cried aloud,
 with high praise ready on my tongue.

Glory be to the Father...

Word of God

Isaiah 43: 1-2

DO NOT BE AFRAID, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine. Should you pass through the sea, I will be with you; or through rivers, they will not swallow you up. Should you walk through fire, you will not be scorched and the flames will not burn you.

*Into your hands, O Lord,
 I commend my spirit. (cf. Ps 30: 6)*

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH

(Text, back cover B)

As the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so, through Christ, does our consolation overflow. (2 Co 1: 5)

INTERCESSIONS

Let us put our trust in the all-powerful love of Christ our Saviour:

R Pay heed to us and save us!

You call bishops to lead your people in fidelity to the Gospel:

– grant them the courage to follow you without fear of consequences. **R**

You took your place among those caught by sorrow and distress:

– fill all bishops with compassion for the sick and the suffering. **R**

You are the courage of martyrs:

– protect those whose ministry takes them into dark and dangerous places. **R**

Personal intentions

Our Father...

O Lord, the fire of your love filled the martyr Saint Polycarp with the courage to defy the fear of death for the sake of the Gospel. Grant all your people the grace to love as he loved, to live as he lived, and to die in the faith for which he died, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MASS**Wednesday of the Seventh Week in Ordinary Time**

SAINT POLYCARP

Memorial

● *Saint Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was a disciple of the apostles and a friend of Saint Ignatius of*

Antioch. He went to Rome to confer with Pope Anicetus concerning the celebration of Easter. About the year 155 he suffered martyrdom by burning at the stake in the amphitheatre in Smyrna. ●

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

This holy man fought to the death for the law of his God, never cowed by the threats of the wicked; his house was built on solid rock.

OPENING PRAYER

God of all creation,
 you gave your bishop Polycarp
 the privilege of being counted among the saints
 who gave their lives in faithful witness to the Gospel.
 May his prayers give us the courage
 to share with him the cup of suffering
 and to rise to eternal glory.
 We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever.

● *The Lord loves those who love wisdom.* ●

A reading from the Book of Ecclesiasticus

4: 11-19

WISDOM BRINGS UP her own sons, and cares for those who seek her. Whoever loves her loves life, those who wait on her early will be filled with happiness. Whoever holds her close will inherit honour, and wherever he walks the Lord will bless him. Those who serve her minister to the Holy One, and the Lord loves those who love her. Whoever obeys her judges aright, and whoever pays attention to her dwells secure. If he trusts himself to her he will inherit her, and his descendants will remain in possession of her; for though she takes him at first through winding ways, bringing fear and faintness

on him, plaguing him with her discipline until she can trust him, and testing him with her ordeals, in the end she will lead him back to the straight road and reveal her secrets to him. If he wanders away she will abandon him, and hand him over to his fate.

This is the word of the Lord.

—•**PSALM 118.**—

R (165a) The lovers of your law have great peace,
O Lord.

The lovers of your law have great peace;
they never stumble.

I obey your precepts and your will;
all that I do is before you. **R**

Let my lips proclaim your praise,
because you teach me your statutes.

Let my tongue sing your promise
for your commands are just. **R**

Give life to my soul that I may praise you.

Let your decrees give me help
Lord, I long for your saving help
and your law is my delight. **R**

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,
says the Lord; no one can come to the Father except
through me. **Alleluia!**

● *Anyone who is not against us is for us.* ●

A reading from
the holy Gospel according to Mark

9: 38-40

JOHAN SAID TO JESUS, “Master,
we saw a man who is not one

of us casting out devils in your name; and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him.” But Jesus said, “You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

Lord,
 bless our offerings and make them holy.
 May these gifts fill our hearts
 with the love which gave Saint Polycarp victory
 over all his suffering.
 We ask this through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

If anyone wishes to come after me, he must renounce himself, take up his cross, and follow me, says the Lord. (Mt 16: 24)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord,
 may the mysteries we receive
 give us the spiritual courage which made your martyr
 Polycarp
 faithful in your service and victorious in his suffering.
 Grant this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

M E D I T A T I O N O F T H E D A Y

Because We Belong to Christ

Every day ask God to pour love for your brothers into your heart and to put love for you into theirs. God can deny nothing to a community that prays this way, because it is his will that we love one another as he has loved us.

Where there is no love, put love and you will harvest love. Susceptibility is charity's worst enemy,

humility its best ally. You should be intelligent and holy enough to be the first to give way in a quarrel; and never let squabbles over trifles harm your deep union with your brothers. You may be in the right, but your duty is not to let the sun go down on your anger. Resolve each day anew to pray for your brothers. Pray that you may love, and love while you pray, and the grace of his love will find a way in.

Look on the call to brotherly love as the entry into an immense mystery, since it is your gateway into God himself. Where love is, there is God. You, with your brethren, give God a body, express his presence, and signify his action. Let your whole community become in this way a theophany of his love.

To express this love in authentic action, you must live sharing. Share your time, table, roof, salaries, and belongings. Possess nothing so that one day you may, like Christ, be enriched by all you have given away. Likewise, you should be able to say to each community member: all that is mine is yours.

THE JERUSALEM COMMUNITY RULE OF LIFE

The Jerusalem Community is a monastic fraternity situated in the heart of various cities.

Prayer for the Evening

Let us call on the Lord's name!

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia!

HYMN

Metre: 6 6 8 4 D

The God of Abraham praise,
Whose all sufficient grace

Shall guide me all my happy days,
 In all my ways.
 He calls this man his friend,
 He calls himself my God;
 And he shall save me to the end,
 Through Jesus' blood.

He by himself hath sworn;
 I on this oath depend.
 I shall, on eagle wings upborne,
 To heaven ascend.
 I shall behold his face;
 I shall his power adore,
 And sing the wonders of God's grace
 For evermore.

PSALM 26

1-4

Do not be afraid of the sufferings that are coming to you. (Rv 2: 10)
 In old age, Saint Polycarp, bishop and servant of the Gospel, refused to listen to the voice of fear. Instead, he went courageously to his death for love of Christ, in whom he lived and moved and existed. (cf. Ac 17: 28)

The Lord is my light and my help;
 whom shall I fear?
 The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
 before whom shall I shrink?

When evil-doers draw near
 to devour my flesh,
 it is they, my enemies and foes,
 who stumble and fall.

Though an army encamp against me
 my heart would not fear.
 Though war break out against me
 even then would I trust.

There is one thing I ask of the Lord,
 for this I long,
 to live in the house of the Lord,
 all the days of my life,
 to savour the sweetness of the Lord,
 to behold his temple.

Glory be to the Father...

Word of God

2 Timothy 4: 6-8

MY LIFE IS already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his Appearing.

Keep faithful, and I will give you the crown of life for your prize. (Rv 2: 10)

CANTICLE OF MARY

(Text, back cover A)

If my blood has to be shed as part of your own sacrifice and offering – which is your faith – I shall still be happy and rejoice with all of you. (Ph 2: 17)

INTERCESSIONS

Through the intercession of Saint Polycarp, we pray:

℟ You redeem us by your blood.

Lord Jesus Christ, you inspire the martyrs with the courage to die for you:

– inspire us with the faith to live for you. ℟

Lord Jesus Christ, you sustain all those who persevere in the life of faith to the end:

– strengthen us to run the race to the finish. *R*

Lord Jesus Christ, you gather into the mystery of the cross the sufferings of all those who suffer torture and death for you:

– gather into your glory all those who have died in fidelity to you. *R*

Personal intentions

Our Father...

May the all-powerful God protect us from all evil and bring us to life everlasting. Amen.

MARIAN ANTIPHON

(Text, page 20)

SAINTS

OF TODAY AND YESTERDAY

*O my God, I desire to love you
as my sovereign good above all things.*

SAINTS ZEBINAS, POLYCHRONIUS, MOSES, AND DAMIAN
Hermits (5th century)

Zebinas lived to an advanced age as a hermit near Cyrrhus, Syria (near Aleppo), devoting his days and nights to continual prayer. When his body grew too weak to support itself, Zebinas used a staff to keep himself upright as he prayed. He was known for his warm hospitality toward those who visited him. The hermit Polychronius, who was trained in the spiritual life by Zebinas, followed his mentor's example, becoming a man of constant prayer. The Syrian bishop of Cyrrhus and ecclesiastical historian Theodoret († c. 457) relates that when he met Polychronius he found him so weakened by physical infirmity that he persuaded him to accept two disciples named Moses and Damian to be his companions in the eremitical life. Moses settled near Polychronius, while Damian chose a cell for himself further away. Both of them emulated the austerities of Polychronius, with lives devoted to prayer, contemplation, and manual labor. They excelled in the virtues of simplicity, meekness, modesty, self-denial, and gentleness in conversation.

*We are all of us flowers planted on this earth,
to be picked by God in his own time.*

Saint Théophane Vénard
