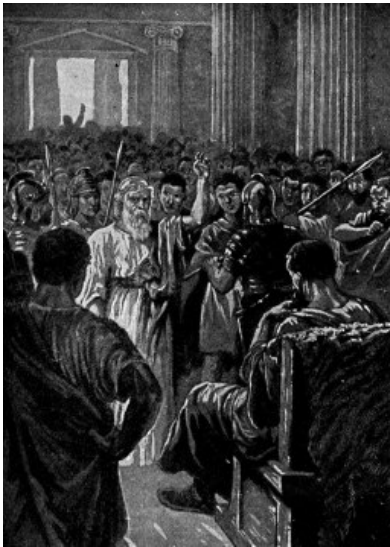


## Lives of Saints

# St Polycarp

70 – 156

Feast day: 23rd February



“Stand fast,  
therefore, in this  
conduct and follow  
the example of the  
Lord...loving each  
other, united in  
truth, helping each  
other with the  
mildness of the  
Lord...”

**St Polycarp**

I was a friend of St John the Apostle, and of St Ignatius of Antioch. In early adulthood I was raised to the episcopate, and I served as Bishop of Smyrna (nowadays Izmir in Turkey). I was a highly respected Christian leader. I testified to the younger generation, condemning as offensive new ideas sown by heretical teachers. I rejected the teachings of Marcion, an influential heretic who tried to create a "new brand" of Christianity by redefining God and rejecting Old Testament teachings. I also worked towards condemnation of the Gnostic heresies that were beginning to spread throughout the Christian church.

The Asia Minor Churches chose me as a representative to discuss with Pope Anicetus in Rome, the date of the Easter celebration. This was a controversial issue in the early Church.

I tried to live a life of holiness, piety and orthodoxy. But I lived among pagans and led the Church under a government opposed to Christianity. During the persecution I tried to exhibit calm courage, neither courting nor fearing martyrdom.

I was 86 when I was led into the crowded Smyrna stadium to be burned alive. The proconsul promised to let me go if I reviled Christ, but I answered: "Eighty and six years have I served him, and He has never done me wrong, how then, can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" Since the flames did not harm me I was finally killed by a dagger. My body was then burned.

S . D . C .  
S O C I E T A S  
D O C T R I N Æ  
C H R I S T I A N Æ