

**23 February**

**Polycarp  
Bishop of Smyrna,  
Martyr c.155**

Almighty God, who gave to your servant Polycarp, boldness to confess the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ before the rulers of this world and courage to die for his faith: grant that we also may be ready to give an answer for the faith that is in us and to suffer gladly for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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Bishop of Smyrna,  
Martyr**

Honoured as one of the first Christian martyrs, Polycarp had been Bishop of Smyrna on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor for over forty years when the persecution of Christians began. He was arrested and given the option to renounce his faith and so save his life. His response was: 'I have been Christ's servant for eighty-six years and he has done me no harm. Can I now blaspheme my King and my Saviour?' He was immediately burnt at the stake. His remains were gathered together and buried outside the city; thus began the practice of celebrating the eucharist over his burial place on the anniversary of his death, a practice which also grew over the martyrs' tombs in the Roman catacombs. Polycarp died in the year 155.

*Sourced from 'Exciting Holiness'*