

Daily Prayer

Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we hold in our prayers the ordinary moments in life—the trials and the joys—and remember Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna and Martyr, 156.

We begin by saying

O Lord, open our lips,

and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

The First Reading

Eleazar, one of the scribes in high position, a man now advanced in age and of noble presence, was being forced to open his mouth to eat swine's flesh. But he, welcoming death with honour rather than life with pollution, went up to the rack of his own accord, spitting out the flesh, as all ought to go who have the courage to refuse things that it is not right to taste, even for the natural love of life.

Those who were in charge of that unlawful sacrifice took the man aside because of their long acquaintance with him, and privately urged him to bring meat of his own providing, proper for him to use, and to pretend that he was eating the flesh of the sacrificial meal that had been commanded by the king, so that by doing this he might be saved from death, and be treated kindly on account of his old friendship with them. But making a high resolve, worthy of his years and the dignity of his old age and the grey hairs that he had reached with distinction and his excellent life even from childhood, and moreover according to the holy God-given law, he declared himself quickly, telling them to send him to Hades.

'Such pretence is not worthy of our time of life,' he said, 'for many of the young might suppose that Eleazar in his ninetieth year had gone over to an alien religion, and through my pretence, for the sake of living a brief moment longer, they would be led astray because of me, while I defile and disgrace my old age. Even if for the present I would avoid the punishment of mortals, yet whether I live or die I will not escape the hands of the Almighty. Therefore, by bravely giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age and leave to the young a noble example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws.'

When he had said this, he went at once to the rack.

So in this way he died, leaving in his death an example of nobility and a memorial of courage, not only to the young but to the great body of his nation.

2 Maccabees 6.18-28, 31

The Psalm

How shall I repay the Lord ♦
for all the benefits he has given to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation ♦
and call upon the name of the Lord.
I will fulfil my vows to the Lord ♦
in the presence of all his people.
Precious in the sight of the Lord ♦
is the death of his faithful servants.
O Lord, I am your servant, ♦
your servant, the child of your handmaid;
you have freed me from my bonds.

I will offer to you a sacrifice of thanksgiving ♦
and call upon the name of the Lord.

I will fulfil my vows to the Lord ♦
in the presence of all his people,

In the courts of the house of the Lord, ♦
in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.

Alleluia.

Psalm 116.10-17

The Gospel Reading

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favour of him. And he said to her, 'What do you want?' She said to him, 'Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.' But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.'

Matthew 20.20-23

We continue with the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the reading has to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

The Reflection

From For All the Saints

The whole Church joins in honouring Polycarp, a bishop who was martyred on this date in the year 156. For over forty years he guided the Christians of Smyrna, a city on the western coast of Asia Minor, and brought healing wisdom to issues which divided the churches

at that time.

When the Roman authorities suddenly launched a campaign of terror against the Church, Polycarp went into hiding, but was soon discovered and brought back to face the pagan governor before a large crowd in the public arena. The governor urged him to renounce the Christian faith and to curse Jesus Christ.

Polycarp answered: "For eighty-six years I have been his servant, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme against my king and Saviour?" At this he was bound to a stake and, as he prayed, the wood at his feet was set ablaze. Eyewitnesses reported that the flames did not touch him, but formed a kind of vault around his body, so that a gladiator had to be sent into the fire to kill him.

Afterwards his people gathered his remains and buried them in a cemetery outside the city. Every year, on the anniversary of his martyrdom, they celebrated the eucharist at Polycarp's grave, "both as a memorial for those who have already fought the contest and for the training and preparation of those who will do so in the future."

When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle

The Canticle ~ A Song of God's Descending

*Many waters cannot quench love;
neither can the floods drown it.*

Set me as a seal upon your heart, ♦
as a seal upon your arm;

For love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave; ♦
its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame.

Many waters cannot quench love, ♦

neither can the floods drown it.

If all the wealth of our house were offered for love, ♦
it would be utterly scorned.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning is now
And shall be for ever

*Many waters cannot quench love;
neither can the floods drown it.*

Cf Song of Solomon 8.6,7

*We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions)
and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.*

The Intercessions

For all the peoples of the world;
that they may know you as the God of peace,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For nations, for leaders and governments;
that integrity may mark all their dealings,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who labour for righteousness;
that your presence and help may give them courage,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For communities torn by dissension and strife;
that your forgiveness may bring them healing,

we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For the anxious, the lonely, the bereaved;
that consolation and peace may be theirs,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For the Church, your household and family;
that she may be firm in the confession of her hope,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who are separated from us by death;
that theirs may be the kingdom which is unshakeable,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

O God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great Shepherd of the sheep:
make us perfect in all goodness to do your will
and to be what you would have us be;
through him to whom be glory for ever,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Our prayers conclude

Maker of heaven and earth,
your love blazed so strongly
in the heart of your servant Polycarp
that he won eternal life
out of the devouring flames of persecution.
By this memorial of his courage,
grant us such confidence in your promises,

that we may share in the surpassing joy
of knowing Jesus Christ our Lord;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

We conclude

May Christ, who sends us to the nations,
give us the power of his Spirit.

Amen.

Credits:

Scripture quotations: The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches in the USA. Used by permission. All Rights Reserved.

The Psalm: Common Worship: Psalter © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

The Canticle: Common Worship: Canticles © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

The Intercessions: Scottish Episcopal Church—Form 1 (adapted)

The Collect: For All the Saints © 2007, General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada

The Concluding Sentence: Common Worship: Daily Prayer © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

The reflection: For All the Saints

Church of the Redeemer

162 Bloor Street West Toronto, ON M5S 1M4

416.922.4948

office@theredeemer.ca

www.TheRedeemer.ca

Twitter: @theRedeemerTO

Facebook: theRedeemerTO

Instagram: theRedeemerTO