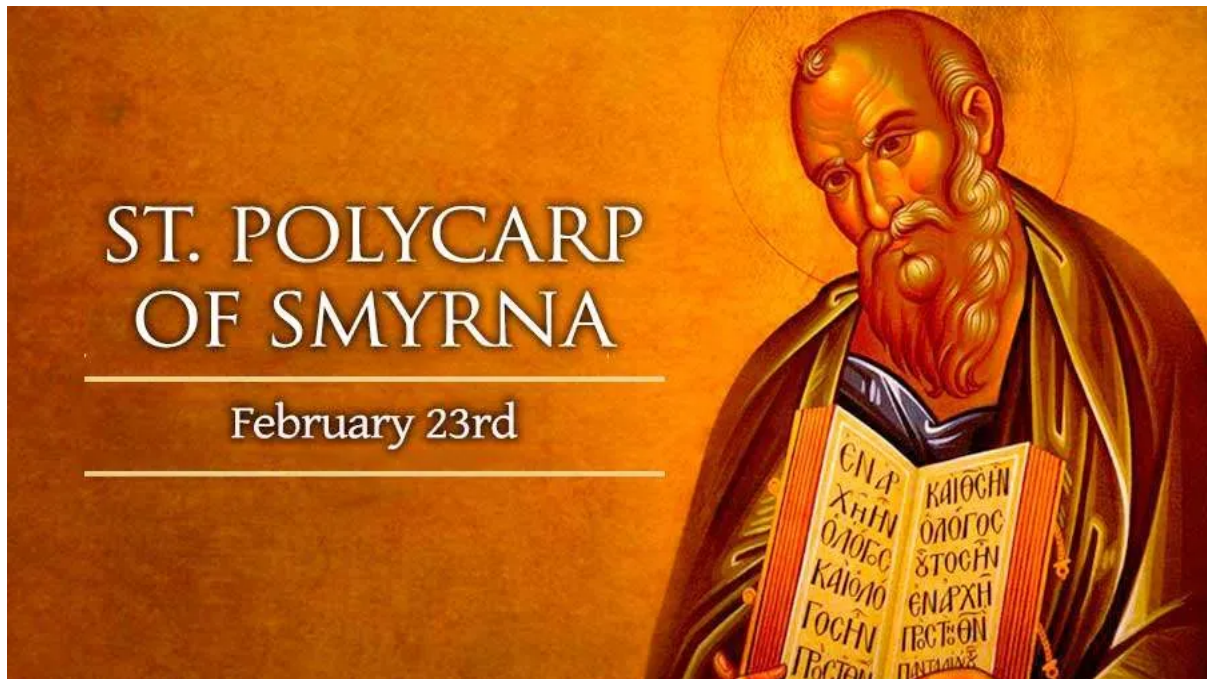


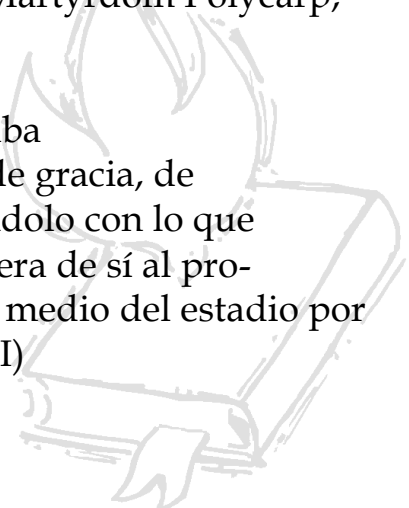
Homily
Good Friday - A
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
April 07, 2023

Is 52: 13 - 53: 12
Ps 31: 2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25
Heb 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9
Jn 18: 1 - 19: 42



While he spoke these and many other like things, he was filled with confidence and joy, and his countenance was full of grace, so that not merely did it fall as it troubled by the things set on him but on the contrary, the proconsul was astonished and sent his herald to proclaim in the midst of the stadium thrice. (Martyrdom Polycarp, Chapter XII)

Cuando decía estas y otras muchas cosas, estaba lleno de valor y alegría, y su rostro rebosaba de gracia, de manera que no sólo no lo achicaban inquietándolo con lo que le decían, sino que, por el contrario, sacaba fuera de sí al proconsul. Mandó a su heraldo que anunciase en medio del estadio por tres veces. (Martirio de Policarpo, Capitulo XII)



St. Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian. This proclamation having been made by the herald the whole multitude both of the heathen and the Jews who dwelt at Smyrna cried out with uncontrollable fury and in a loud voice, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians and the overthrower of our gods. He who has been teaching many not to sacrifice or to worship to the gods." Speaking thus, they cried out, and besought Philip the Asiarch to let loose a lion upon [Polycarp](#). But Philip answered that it was not lawful for him to do so, seeing the shows of wild beasts were already finished. Then it seemed [good](#) to them to cry out with one consent, that [Polycarp](#) should be burnt alive. For thus it behooved the vision which was revealed to him in regard to his pillow to be fulfilled, when, seeing it on fire as he was [praying](#), he turned about and said [prophetically](#) to the [faithful](#) that were with him, I must be burnt alive.

«Policarpo ha confesado que es cristiano». Una vez que el heraldo dijo esto, toda la turba de los paganos y de los judíos residentes en Esmirna gritó con rabia incontenible y a grandes voces: «Este es el maestro de Asia, el padre de los cristianos, el destructor de nuestros dioses, el que enseña a muchos a no sacrificar ni adorar». A la vez que decían estas cosas, gritaban y pedían al asiarca Filipos que soltara un león contra Policarpo. Éste respondió que no le estaba permitido, porque los combates de fieras ya se habían terminado. Entonces les dio por gritar a una que Policarpo fuese quemado vivo. En efecto, era necesario que se cumpliera la visión que se le había manifestado a propósito de su almohada, cuando la vio arder estando en oración, y proféticamente dijo dirigiéndose a los fieles que estaban con él: «Es necesario que yo sea quemado vivo».

I just read a passage from a text called "The Martyrdom of St.

Polycarp." St. Polycarp was a Second Century saint and martyr who

was a disciple of the Apostle John (the only one of the twelve apostles that did not die a martyr's death).

It is said that the Apostle John instructed his disciples about how God died on the cross according to the flesh (or his human nature). In the prologue to the gospel (which used to be read at the end of practically every Mass prior to Vatican II), "In the beginning was the word and the word was in God's presence and the word was God (Jn 1: 1)." The Apostle John taught his disciples that Jesus had died, the God had died, descended into hell and then rose to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father.

St. John preached his experience of this death and resurrection to his disciple Polycarp and St. Polycarp shared this experience to St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. 2nd Century) who laid out this theology in a book called *Adversus Heereses* (Against the Heresies). Which we believe is the first fundamental theology that was written following the bible.

Because of this teaching, Roman authorities arrested and sentenced St. Polycarp to be burned at the stake, which Polycarp joyfully accepted. As history teaches us, Polycarp had very much adhered himself to the

teachings of the faith. Similar to St. Stephen (the protomartyr of the Church), St. Polycarp was willing to give his life not out of suffering, not out of pain, but out of sheer joy. That is why the second part of the gospel of John is called the “Book of Glory” instead of a book of suffering.

In John’s gospel, instead of looking on the passion, suffering and death of our Lord as a bad thing, the gospel of John portrays the crucifixion as *joyful*, showing us that someone was willing to die for us so that we could live.

If you focused on what we just read from the scriptures in the Book of Isaiah and the Letter to the Hebrews, we learn how those of the faith will be despised and will be hated; as stated in the Book of Wisdom 2: 1, “the just one is obnoxious to us” and those of evil will try to eradicate those who are just.

As we commemorate today from our Lord’s death, those who are just in this world will be hated and will be torn down. In the scriptures, those of faith will be maligned and will be marginalized. We will be prejudiced against. This is the world in which we chose to live; this is

the world who prefers the worldly over spiritual things. For those who persevere, for those who joyfully go to that death knowing that God is with them and us every step of the way, we will suffer a little (possibly A LOT) but our love with God will be everlasting on the other side.

It dawned on me as I was celebrating this Good Friday service here at St. Anne's Church that we do not offer the particular liturgy in person at St. Anne's because I cannot be two places at once. At St. Anne's, one of our good souls over there will offer a "Stations of the Cross" service while this liturgy takes place. The faithful at St. Anne's will offer communion to the faithful. After the Good Friday service, the faithful at St. Anne's will then decorate for Holy Saturday to get ready for the big weekend.

I *love* St. Anne's Church and I *love* St. Patrick's. I love both communities, especially all the people who are marginalized and forgotten. The Village of St. Anne's only consists of 1,200 residents; Momence has three times as many but the villages pale in comparison to the surrounding communities in Bradley, Bourbonnais or certainly Kankakee. In a way, these small villages might be somewhat dismissed

by our larger neighbors and yet... prior to writing out this homily, I received a note from Megan Barnhard from Waterleaf Services about the \$3,000 plus dollars we donated to her cause so that we could help pregnant women with medical issues. Megan told me that the faith in these small communities often is greater than some of the larger ones who assist her cause because the ones who might be pushed aside often demonstrate a faith that larger communities take for granted.

For me, this is the joy I have for serving you – the faith of God in the “periphery” Churches is on what God calls on us to focus. Faith in God is what I am supposed to be focusing, regardless of the communities’ size, knowing full well that the world at large might dismiss us, but God puts us in the front of the line. On this particular day, we learn about the *joy* of martyrdom, suffering and sacrifice. We have learned all too well that martyrdom within the faith did not just exist in the First Century and the Second Century. In the 21st Century, martyrdom is alive and well, although the methods of destruction have been changed from the sword, the cross and the fire into gossip, social media and the pen and microphone, we are marginalized.

We learn at today's commemoration of our Lord's death that if we stay faithful to God despite the attacks from outside the faith and certainly inside it, look what ends up happening. Those who persevere end up embraced by God and the "joy" of this suffering carries us to heaven with God at our side, no matter what others do to us (and others can be relentless). As illustrated by the cross and certainly by St. Polycarp, God will never abandon us and will embrace us for what we do in the same of love.

Speaking of which, I *love* that passage from the Eighth Chapter of Romans (vss. 35-39), which gives me hope in the worst of times within life, especially concerning the subject of martyrdom...

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written: "For your sake we are being slain all the day; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hermanos: ¿Qué cosa podrá apartarnos del amor con que nos ama Cristo? ¿Las tribulaciones? ¿Las angustias? ¿La persecución? ¿El hambre? ¿La desnudez? ¿El peligro? ¿La espada?

Ciertamente de todo esto salimos más que victoriosos, gracias a aquel que nos ha amado; pues estoy convencido de que ni la muerte ni la vida, ni los ángeles ni los demonios, ni el presente ni el futuro, ni los poderes de este mundo, ni lo alto ni lo bajo, ni creatura alguna podrá apartarnos del amor que nos ha manifestado Dios en Cristo Jesús.

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2: 6-11).

Cristo, siendo Dios, no consideró que debía aferrarse a las prerrogativas de su condición divina, sino que, por el contrario, se anonadó a sí mismo, tomando la condición de siervo, y se hizo semejante a los hombres. Así, hecho uno de ellos, se humilló a sí mismo y por obediencia aceptó incluso la muerte, y una muerte de cruz.

Por eso Dios lo exaltó sobre todas las cosas y le otorgó el nombre que está sobre todo nombre, para que, al nombre de Jesús, todos doblen la rodilla en el cielo, en la tierra y en los abismos, y todos reconozcan públicamente que Jesucristo es el Señor, para gloria de Dios Padre.

We read last passage I quoted from Philippians during our Palm Sunday liturgy, reflecting how Jesus emptied himself so that we could

live. Polycarp followed that same example of faith and because of that, we have all these individuals, all these martyrs, all these people who have been oppressed and beaten down, who have suffered and who have died and were willing to make that sacrifice because they loved God; they loved you.

We also love you in God's name and that is why we continue to offer these services because *you are that* important. I just ask you to keep persevering, keep the faith, keep finding that love of God in your heart. No matter what happens in word and in work, let us always sacrifice and offer mercy to others in the name of the Lord, according to St. Paul's letter to the Colossians (3: 17), that we find hope and joy in what we remember and commemorate on this particular day.

I would like to end this homily with a prayer that is dedicated to St. Polycarp, the one who followed the example of Christ. One of many examples of the 11 of the twelve apostles who died because they loved God and they loved Christ and they were willing to put their lives on the line just like I am willing to put my life on the line for all of you. I would like to end this homily with a prayer that is offered in

this book called "The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp." As he was being led to his death, he offered this prayer in thanksgiving to God, which I offer you because you are that important.

Oh Lord God Almighty, the father of your beloved and blessed son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of you, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of righteous who live before you.

I give you thanks that you have counted me worthy of this day and this hour that I should have a part in the number of your martyrs in the cup of your Christ to the resurrection of eternal life both soul and body through the incorruption by the Holy Ghost among whom may I be accepted this day before you is a fat and acceptable sacrifice according as you the ever truthful God have for ordained have revealed beforehand to me and now have fulfilled.

Wherefore also I praise you for all things. I bless you. I glorify you along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, your beloved son, with whom to you and the Holy Ghost be glory now and to all coming ages. Amen. This is our prayer.

Señor, Dios todopoderoso, Padre de tu amado y bendito siervo Jesucristo, por el que te hemos conocido, Dios de los ángeles, de las potencias, de toda la creación y de todo el pueblo de los justos que viven en tu presencia.

Te bendigo porque me has juzgado digno de este día y de esta hora, de tomar parte en el número de los mártires, en el cáliz de tu Cristo, para resurrección de la vida eterna en alma y cuerpo, en la incorruptibilidad del Espíritu Santo. Que hoy sea yo recibido con ellos en tu presencia, en sacrificio generoso y grato, tal como Tú, el

Dios verdadero que no engaña, lo has preparado de antemano, lo anunciaste y lo has cumplido.

Por ello y por encima de todas las cosas te alabo, te bendigo, te glorifico, por medio de Jesucristo, Sumo Sacerdote eterno y celeste, tu amado siervo, por el cual la gloria (sea dada) a Ti junto a Él y al Espíritu Santo, ahora y en los siglos venideros. Amén.

This is our prayer.