

# MORNING MEDITATION

Friday, First Week of Lent

**Cultivate forbearance till you mature in strength of character.**

## **Ezekiel 18:21-28**

The prophet says, repent and all will be well! Virtue means strength and life. Absence of virtue means weakness and eventual death. Ezekiel says, the Lord remembers virtuous life and forgets crimes of the past. You are called to live virtuous lives!

## **Psalm 130**

Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord,  
Lord, hear my voice;  
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication!

## **Mathew 5:20-26**

In this excerpt, Mathew offers us very challenging messages of Jesus:

- Your holiness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees! You are called to live higher standards of life. You are called to live virtuous lives!
- All forms of prayer and worship call forth reconciliation. Sacrifice and worship assume genuine confession of sin, true penitence and forgiveness from the heart. Be reconciled with others! Be reconciled now!
- Be aware of the words you speak. Be sensitive and speak affirming, encouraging, healing, supporting, empowering words!
- Be aware of words that may insult or hurt others. Words could alienate you from the community - they break down relationship. Speak words that bring life and not death.
- Make peace in time and make it now! Now is the time for reconciliation and peace!

**Genuine Forgiveness is Unconditional. Learn to forgive from the heart!**

**Saint of the Day, February 23 – St. Polycarp and 89 other saints are remembered this day.**

St. Polycarp was born around 69 C.E. but we know little else of his childhood and youth. He was a member of that small band of “Apostolic Fathers”, the immediate followers of the Apostles. He was a disciple of St. John, the “Beloved Disciple” of Jesus. A letter from Saint John to Polycarp has survived. Soon after the death of St. John, Polycarp was named the Bishop of Smyrna (now Turkey).

Tradition tells us that Polycarp actually kissed the chains of the great St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch as the latter passed by Smyrna en route to martyrdom. St. Ignatius also wrote a letter to Polycarp which is still extant. Polycarp instructed St. Irenaeus (famous for his work Against Heresies) and Papias of Hierapolis, the important early Scripture scholar. He traveled all the way to Rome to meet with Pope Saint Anicetus to work out when, exactly, Easter should be observed each year.

Polycarp was an unrelenting defender of the orthodox faith especially against the heresies known as Valentinianism and Marcionism, both of which were types of Gnosticism. He was an “Apostolic Father,” a disciple of St. John, a defender of orthodoxy, the bishop of Smyrna, the friend of Ignatius of Antioch and Pope Anicetus, teacher and letter-writer and a sort of bridge between the Eastern and Western Churches.

In the sixth year of Marcus Aurelius, a violent persecution broke out in Asia in which the faithful gave heroic proof of their courage. When the chief of police, Herod, sent horsemen by night to surround his lodging, Polycarp was upstairs in bed, but refused to make his escape saying, ‘God’s Will be done.’ He went down, met them at the door, ordered them supper, and desired only some time in prayer before he went with them.

At 86, Polycarp was led into the crowded Smyrna stadium to be burned alive. The flames did not harm him and he was finally killed by a dagger. The centurion ordered the saint’s body burned. He died in 155.

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