February 23rd: Memorial of Saint Polycarp, Bishop and Martyr

Gospel text (*Jn* 15:18-21): Jesus said to his disciples; “If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you…"

Saint Polycarp, bishop and martyr (69-155 B.C.)

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Today, when remembering Saint Polycarp, a great Father of the Church, history shows us that Christ and His Gospel are always a contradiction sign for the world. So did Saint Polycarp understand it and lived by it. He was born in Smyrna, in present-day Turkey, which became a Roman province in Asia Minor, and he died a martyr in this city, having been a Bishop of the local Church.

Polycarp, whose name means "abundant fruit", had met the apostle John and had been his disciple; He wrote a letter to the Christians in Philippi (Greece) to encourage them to live by following Jesus Christ. Thus he wrote to the first Christians: "Wherefore, girding up your loins serve the Lord in fear and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and believed in Him who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave him glory and a throne at His right hand".

—Today and always, we are invited to truly know God and to follow Jesus Christ, and to help us in this purpose let us ask the intercession of Saint Polycarp of Smyrna.