

## The History of the Catholic Church

### 2<sup>nd</sup> century: the Church enters the public square

#### **Events of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century:**

- 98-117: Trajan becomes emperor, begins the persecution of the Christians
- 98-106: Dacian wars and Rome annexes Dacia (modern day Romania)
- 122-132: Emperor Hadrian conquers Britannia and builds Hadrian's wall
- 132-136: Bar Kokhba Revolt: The final Jewish-Roman war
- 144: Marcion is rejected by Rome and begins Marcionism
- 161-166: Roman-Parthian war: war with Armenia and upper Mesopotamia
- 165-180: The Antonine Plague
- 166-180: The Marcomannic: war with the Germanic peoples
- 193: the year of the 5 emperors
- 193-211: Reign of Emperor Septimius Severus

#### **Politics:**

As the century turns, we leave the last major persecution of the Church of the 1<sup>st</sup> century that happened during the reign of Emperor Decian between 96-98 AD. Emperor Trajan followed Decian who was more placid towards the Christians. No Roman emperor for the next century will support this fast growing heathen religion but they will not engage large-scale, empire-wide persecutions of the Church. Emperor Trajan, and the emperors who follow him, will focus on territory expansion. Trajan will head east into territories not annexed by the empire, namely Dacia also known as the region of Macedon. Conflict arose in the 80's due to the Roman Empire's need for resources. Emperor Domitian fought the small country and lost leading to a truce in 88. Trajan saw the need for resources and the strength of the Empire as a chance to finally defeat Dacia and annex it into the Empire. He succeeded in his military efforts and annexed the country in 106. Trajan would then continue to conquer the Mesopotamian and Armenian regions.

Emperor Hadrian succeeded Trajan and focused on the western edges of the Empire. Hadrian fought against the English and Scottish Empires defeating both of them in 121. In an effort to solidify the defenses of the Empire on the western front and end the fighting, he built a wall around Britannia and Scotland to repel the northern invaders known as Hadrian's wall. He was going to continue his efforts in the west when conflicts arose in the east, namely Judea, causing him to pull back and end these conflicts. Although the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD and the Jews dispersed, the conflicts were not over. Under the reign of Trajan, small Jewish skirmishes continued and these skirmishes continued to rise during the reign of Hadrian.

As Hadrian pulled forces from the west to the east, the Jewish military campaign had begun in the last of the three major Jewish wars. Following the 1<sup>st</sup> revolt in 66-70 AD, the Romans enacted a major policy change: Military presence in Judea increased, religious tensions rose significantly, the administrative life and economy of the country changed, and a major suppression of the Jews began. Coupled with the high tensions for over two centuries, the Jews were at a breaking point. Following the construction of a statue of Jupiter in the Temple in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and through the provocation of Quintus Tinelus Rufus, the governor of Judea, war broke. Simon Bar Kokhba lead the Jewish people into a war against the Roman Empire and Roman occupation. As a sign of the significance of this event, Roman scholars tend to call this event the Jewish Revolt. Jewish scholars call this the Second (or Third) Great Jewish War. 580,000 Jews would die from war or starvation and 50 fortresses and 985 villages were destroyed. Following this war, Jews were banned from Jerusalem. Although the great war was over, Jewish communities continued to survive in other parts of the Empire.

Throughout these wars and revolts, the Church continued to grow and survive. Internally the Church was becoming a mess. With the reality setting in that Jesus might not be back for a long time, with political tensions forming in the Church and doctrinal issues emerging, the Church needed time to clarify its doctrines and establish peace within itself. The next few centuries will be dominated by emergent heresies, strong religious leaders fighting against each other, and strong internal conflicts.

As the Empire continued to grow and expand, the opportunities for more than trade to circulate the Empire. In 166, following the conquests of Mesopotamia and the near east, scholars believe that soldiers returned from war with a new disease. Whether the disease is smallpox or measles is inconsequential. This plague killed between 5 and 10 million, roughly 10 % of the Empire. Some scholars estimate between 5 and 33% of the Empire died. Although small epidemics were common in the Roman Empire, this was the first large-scale pandemic to hit the Empire. Due to the number of casualties, the Roman army was decimated. The work force of the country was also greatly hit. Some scholars believe that this event was the beginning of the decline of the Roman empire. Other argue that this event was just another catastrophic event. Regardless, the Roman empire would not fall until 650 and life continued after the plague.

Following the devastation caused by the plague, Rome was under attack by the German tribes on the northeastern front of the Empire. Although these wars had been fought for most of the century, with the renewed vigor rising from surviving the pandemic, they were ready to finally conquer the Germanic tribes. In 171 Marcus Aurelius recruited gladiators due to the devastation caused by the plague to his army. He headed into modern day Czech Republic and Slovakia repelling the Germanic invaders. This effort would be successful until his death in 181.

Political unrest began due to the murder of Emperor Commodus. Pertinax was named Emperor but was killed three months later while trying to reason with his would-be assassins. Didius Julianus bought his way to the seat of Caesar but was ousted by Septimius Severus and Didius Julianus was executed on June 1. Although Septimius Severus was accepted by the Senate, Prescennius Niger declared himself emperor. This act of declaring himself emperor led to a civil war within Rome. Septimius Severus named Clodius Albinus as co-emperor to prevent him from

becoming a political rival and a threat. Septimius Severus won the official role in 193 ending the year of the 5 Emperor and ending the civil war.

### **Church Developments:**

After the persecutions of the Church under Emperor Decian ended in 98 AD, the Church enjoyed a century of peace. Minor persecutions existed throughout the Empire as many Roman citizens believed that the Christians were trying to destroy the Empire. As the century progressed, new ideas about the ill of the Christians emerged throughout the Empire. On the more favorable end, Christians were considered atheists, namely non-believers of the Roman cult of deities. On the less favorable end, Christians were considered a secret society that killed non-Christian babies and engaged in orgy cults. The author Octavius writing in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century writes that Christian initiation rites involved the candidate killing a non-Christian baby disguised in flour. After the killing, they would pull down a curtain and everyone groped their nearest neighbor in a orgy. These ideas sprang up throughout the Empire. The most common criticisms were the secret nature of Christian initiation rites and the ignorance of the Christians.

Some of these criticisms were true. Christian initiation rites were secret but nothing else. In order to protect the Church from increased persecution and the destruction of the religion, all of the initiation rites and many of the Sacraments were secretive. Only those who were initiated got to see the Mass or see the Sacred Body of Jesus in the Eucharist. The criticism of ignorance was also true. Christianity had yet to develop a systematic and philosophically based approach to her teachings. The 2<sup>nd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> centuries would see a huge emphasis on the intellectual side of Christianity.

Although not new to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the witness of the martyrs was the most attractive part of Christianity. The courage and valor of the thousands of Christians who gave up their lives for the sake of Christ and the Church massively influenced the people. Thousands of people flocked to this fledgling church to join. Although we might characterize the 2<sup>nd</sup> century as an era of persecution and unrest in the Church, it was also an era of incredible growth.

Internally the Church was struggling. The struggles of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century are minor compared to the same struggles two to three centuries later. With no central system of doctrine or a codified belief system, many people developed their own theology and tried to force it upon the Church. One of the major players in this game is Marcion. Marcion lived from 85-160. Heavily influenced by the Gnostic ideologies, he attempted to reform and represent these ideas as the orthodox faith. He was denounced by the Church for his beliefs in 144 and Gnosticism was formally repressed.

Issues of Church administration began to surface. Women, greatly empowered by the message of Jesus, were advocating for greater leadership in the Church. Although women were allowed to be the caretakers of the Church, no longer forced into marriage, and enjoyed equal status amongst Christian communities, this proved too little. In many places throughout the Christian world, women attempted to lead churches, take over the sacramental role of the presbyters and bishops, and even oust their bishop. Women were not the only ones leading this charge to a change in leadership. Many men advocated for the abolition of the hierarchy of the church in favor of a

society of equals. The Church reacted in a variety of ways to these challenges to Church authority. Many of the great saints of the era, namely Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, Clement of Alexandria, and Justin Martyr fought against these ideologies and ill-formed beliefs through their writings and preaching. Men were deposed from service and many exiled from the church. Women were placated and given different roles. Many people do not realize the power of Christianity on the equality of the sexes that led to these controversies. Women were no longer considered property who are forced into marriage for the sake of children. Women were allowed to not marry and remain virgins, some of the great examples include St. Cecelia, St. Catherine, and St. Agnes. In addition, women had leadership roles including administrative roles in caring for the church, managing funds, and evangelization. During the persecutions by the Roman government, the Christians would use women to pass messages between communities to prevent the Romans from intercepting these messages. Until this moment in history, women were considered too dumb or inconsequential to be given such an important task. When the Romans realized they were being duped by the women, they persecuted men and women equally.

The greatest development of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Church was the proliferation of thought and the expansiveness of Christianity. By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century centers of Christianity and Christian thought were emerging all over the Empire. The vast majority of this new wave of Christianity was concentrated in the centers of Antioch, Turkey, Alexandria, Egypt, Jerusalem, Israel, Constantinople, Turkey, and Rome, Italy. Each of these locations would host a different form of philosophy, education, and thought leading to massive debates across the Empire and Christianity. These five centers would become the dominant centers of Christianity until the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the Church remained largely the same as the 1<sup>st</sup> century. No major developments in Sacraments, sacramental theology or Church practice. The same roles of the bishops, presbyters, and deacons remain. The main developments, as we will see in section on heresies and spiritual development, were the explanation of the faith and the ability to enter the public square. No longer formally persecuted and largely ignored by the Roman government as a form of tolerance, Christians now entered the public square. Bishops and laity alike would engage in public debates with the leading philosophers and intellectuals of the era. Internally the Church would hold public debates with heretics and those with contrasting viewpoints both to seek clarity on the faith but also to develop Christian doctrines. With the criticism of Christians being ignorant and stupid, these public debates greatly demonstrated the Church's intellectual ability to the world. Many people saw in these intellectual debates the truth of the Christian faith and converted to the faith. Therefore the 2<sup>nd</sup> century ends with waves of people entering the Church due to the examples of the martyrs and the beauty and truth of the Christian message. As we close the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the Christian Church has grown to become one of the largest religions of the Roman Empire.

### **Heresies:**

Docetism:

Starting as early as the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and continuing to rage for several centuries is the belief that Jesus was not human but a fleshly existence in which God entered. Docetism believed that Mary “donated” a body for God to enter. Thus Jesus was not fully human but God who entered the body Mary gave him and left the body prior to the Crucifixion. Their beliefs are justified by two sources. St. Paul speaks about the body as a vessel that is discarded at death and from John’s Gospel where Jesus descends and ascends. Docetism rejects the material world as evil and corrupt. Docetism responds to the challenges in Christianity that God took on flesh, that God could suffer on the Cross, and that the body is good. Docetism would reemerge in the 4<sup>th</sup> century as Donatism.

Ignatius of Antioch wrote several letters denouncing the theology and beliefs of the Docetists, which would become the Orthodox teachings of the faith. He responds to the claim that the flesh is bad by turning to the examples of the martyrs. How would the martyrs suffer the way they did if the body didn’t matter? Similarly, the Eucharist must be the flesh of Jesus thus stating that even Jesus valued the reality of flesh and fleshly existence. Ignatius’ greatest critique came in the nature of salvation. If Jesus didn’t come in the flesh to redeem humanity and redeem humanity through his flesh, then we cannot be saved. Jesus had to unite suffering humanity in his own flesh and be crucified with it if we are to be saved.

Gnosticism:

We encountered Gnosticism in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Gnosticism of the 1<sup>st</sup> century was hidden and centered around small communities that hid in the desert. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, with the rise of Christianity in the public square and becoming more visible, Gnosticism reemerges as a challenge to the Christian faith. Marcion, the greatest proponent of Gnosticism, emerged somewhere between the 130-140’s to represent Gnosticism as an intellectual and philosophical understanding of Christianity. The new form of Gnosticism focused on the evil of the world. If God knew that the world would delve into evil and he did nothing to stop it, then wouldn’t he be responsible for all the evil in the world? Similarly, the example of scorpions and noxious plants indicate that the world has fallen into greater evil and must be rejected. His response to the view of an evil world fallen through sin was to reject the God of the Old Testament as vengeful and vindictive who punishes every violation of the Mosaic Law in favor of the loving and merciful God of the New Testament, Jesus. Marcion would advocate for the rejection of the Old Testament, all Gospels except Mark, and most of St. Paul’s writings. He advocated for the rejection of all worldly things and the world in favor of an intense spiritualism focused on God alone. In contrast to the original form of Gnosticism, Marcion deviated from the idea of a dualistic universe with a good and a bad god who fight each other. Instead the divine spark from Adam in humans is gone and we must rely on the grace of God for all things.

The Church rejected and condemned Marcion’s beliefs in 144. The one all-good God created all things as good and sin has marred their glory not destroyed it. Therefore all things of the world have intrinsic goodness that cannot be removed due to sin. Humans, affected by the fall of Adam and sin, are reliant on God’s grace in all things but also have a part to play in the salvation of the world. The body is good as the instrument through which we are saved since Jesus saved us through his body. The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament

who shows through the two Testaments his will and love for humanity and the world. Tertullian would be the main antagonist to Marcion's theology.

#### Montanism:

Out of the three major heresies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Montanism was the smallest. Emerging somewhere around half-way through the century, Montanism rose as a special revelation about the coming of Jesus. The Montanists believed that they had received special revelation from the Holy Spirit that Jesus was coming back soon and that new revelations had been given to the leaders of this movement. Coming from sources like the Oracle of Delphi and the Temple of Apollo didn't give them as much credence as they wished. Nevertheless their prophecies indicated that the Holy Spirit was giving them new revelations that would reshape Christian thought. Whether Montanists believed that these new revelations were intended to be codified as Scripture or to enter the Christian teachings is uncertain. Regardless they felt that the Church needed to listen to and respond to these new revelations.

Under Celus the Church responded to this new movement. Jesus is the fullness of all revelation and no other revelation would be given. Therefore, even though we all know that Jesus is coming back at some point, new revelations must correspond to the original revelation of Jesus and be part of the magisterial teaching of the Church. The Montanists were not formally condemned until the 4<sup>th</sup> century largely due to its small size and lack of impact on the Church.

#### Spiritual Developments:

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Century lacks the massive spiritual developments of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. This century was dominated by growth and clarification of Christian teachings. The only major development of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century was the ability for a penitent to receive absolution more than once. Responding to the realization that people sin and need a chance of repentance, the bishops allowed the faithful more than one chance to receive the Sacrament of Penance. Realizing the great challenge in fighting against sin and the severity of the penances, many people began to wait until late in life to be baptized even waiting until the moment of death.

#### Key figures:

Unfortunately information regarding the early church fathers is lacking. They didn't record their lives prior to taking an office or to explain their writings.

St. Ignatius of Antioch: Before assuming the office of bishop at the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, we know nothing about the life of St. Ignatius. After taking the office of bishop of Antioch, he was arrested and sent to Rome for trial. On his way to the trial he penned seven letters sent to various churches and people. These letters contain his theology on the role of the bishop emphasizing not only his role but the importance of church structure and obedience to the bishop.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Born in Smyrna at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century where he knew bishop Polycarp and learned Christianity. As a presbyter, he went on mission to Rome to fight against the Montanist controversy. He was made a bishop on his return from Rome to Smyrna. St. Irenaeus would pen several letters throughout his life that fought against various heresies

especially Gnosticism. His main theological point was that Jesus assumed all humanity into his flesh when he became man.

**St. Polycarp:** Almost nothing is known about the life of St. Polycarp. He was the bishop of Smyrna and teacher of St. Irenaeus. After a meeting with Marcion, the story of his life shifts to his martyrdom. He wrote several letters only a few of which remain. His martyrdom is captured by an early Christian writer in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and is the earliest Christian account of martyrdom. This story shows the strong link in early Christianity between the martyrdom of a saint and the food they eat at Eucharist.

**Justin Martyr:** He was born and lived in the Roman colony in the region of Samaria, Palestine. By the time of the Kokhba revolt, Justin is on the scene debating with the Jew Trypho. Having reached his manhood and begun his evangelical tour, he would continue to hold public debates and travel throughout Ephesus preaching and teaching. Justin would become one of the most influential interpreters of Christian faith and the best early example of the beliefs of the early church. He contended with great thinkers of his time on every front and wrote a great deal about the Church's beliefs, including the Roman state, pagan philosophy, Judaism, and heretical Christianity.

#### **Art and music:**



Art of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century is sparse. In the first century we saw the rise of symbols that indicated the whereabouts of Christian tombs, Christian sites, or indicated that a person was Christian. Even though the pressure of martyrdom is greatly reduced in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the Church begins to flourish both in numbers and the ability to enter the public square, art doesn't follow the same trajectory. Many scholars suggest that the lack of art in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century is largely due to the lack of capital. Until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and especially the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Christians didn't own property. The church building would not arise until the 4<sup>th</sup> century. So, if they were producing art, where would they put it? The answer is simple: on tombs. The earliest form of Christian art is found on the tombs of the saints, martyrs, and fellow Christians. This art would be highly symbolic and largely biblical, as we will see better examples in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The most

common images portrayed on tombs are, the good shepherd, the healing of the hemorrhaging woman, and Noah's ark. These biblical events show the belief and focus of the early Christians. Healing was central to the work of Christianity: healing from sins, healing from illness, healing from the challenges of the world. The image of Noah represented a freedom from the vices and challenges of the world and hope for a world to come. The image of the Good Shepherd brought relief to a divided and lost church who is quickly but painstakingly developing its theology and practice. Therefore 2<sup>nd</sup> century art is dominated by specific biblical images related to the sentiments of these early Christians and found largely, exclusively, on the tombs of the saints.

**5** Am I not able to write to you about heavenly things? But I am afraid to, lest I should cause harm to you, who are mere babes. So bear with me, lest you be choked by what you are unable to swallow. **2** For I myself, though I am in chains and can comprehend heavenly things, the ranks of the angels and the hierarchy of principalities, things visible and invisible—despite all this I am not yet a disciple. For we still lack many things, so that we may not lack God.

*The Danger of False Teaching*

**6** I urge you, therefore—yet not I, but the love of Jesus Christ—partake only of Christian food, and keep away from every strange plant, which is heresy. **2** These people, while pretending to be trustworthy, mix Jesus Christ with themselves—like those who administer a deadly drug with honeyed wine, which the unsuspecting victim accepts without fear, and so with fatal pleasure drinks down death.

*Safety under the Bishop*

**7** Therefore be on your guard against such people. And you will be, provided that you are not puffed up with pride and that you cling inseparably to Jesus Christ and to the bishop and to the commandments of the apostles. **2** The one who is within the sanctuary is clean, but the one who is outside the sanctuary is not clean. That is, whoever does anything without the bishop and council of presbyters and deacons does not have a clean conscience.

5.1 Cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-2. 5.2 *heavenly things*... *invisible* Cf. Col. 1:16. 6.2 *them-selves* Gk is corrupt; some ancient versions read *themselves*; Lightfoot emends to *poison*. • *without fear* An editor's emendation. Some ancient authorities read *gladly*. 7.1 *Jesus Christ and* Some ancient authorities read *God, Jesus Christ, and*.

*Advance Warning against Error*

**8** Not that I know of any such thing among you; rather, I am guarding you in advance because you are very dear to me and I foresee the snares of the devil. You, therefore, must arm yourselves with gentleness and regain your strength in faith (which is the flesh of the Lord) and in love (which is the blood of Jesus Christ). **2** Let none of you hold a grudge against his neighbor. Do not give any opportunity to the pagans, lest the godly majority be blasphemed on account of a few foolish people. For "woe to the one through whose folly my name is blasphemed among any."

*The Reality of Jesus' Human Experiences*

**9** Be deaf, therefore, whenever anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the family of David, who was the son of Mary; who really was born, who both ate and drank; who really was persecuted under Pontius Pilate, who really was crucified and died while those in heaven and on earth and under the earth looked on; **2** who, moreover, really was raised from the dead when his Father raised him up. In the same way his Father will likewise also raise up in Christ Jesus us who believe in him. Apart from him we have no true life.

**10** But if, as some atheists (that is, unbelievers) say, he suffered in appearance only (while they exist in appearance only<sup>1</sup>), why am I in chains? And why do I want to fight with wild beasts? If that is the case, I die for no reason; what is more, I am telling lies about the Lord.

**11** Flee, therefore, from these wicked offshoots that bear deadly fruit; if anyone even tastes it, he dies on the spot. These people are not the Father's planting. **2** For if they were, they would appear as branches of the cross, and their fruit would be imperishable—the

8.1 *and regain your strength* An emendation. Some ancient authorities read *and renew yourselves*. 8.2 *woe*... *among any* Cf. Isa. 52:5. 11.1 Cf. Matt. 15:13.



*Preparing the Pyre*

**13** These things then happened with surprising swiftness, quicker than words could tell, the crowd swiftly collecting wood and kindling from the workshops and baths, the Jews being especially eager to assist in this, as is their custom. **2** When the pyre was ready, he took off all his clothes and removed his belt; he also tried to take off his shoes, though not previously in the habit of doing this, because all the faithful were always eager to be the first to touch his flesh. For he had been honored in every respect on account of his holy life even before his martyrdom. **3** Then the materials prepared for the pyre were placed around him; and as they were also about to nail him, he said: "Leave me as I am; for the one who enables me to endure the fire will also enable me to remain on the pyre without moving, even without the sense of security that you get from the nails."

*Polycarp's Prayer*

**14** So they did not nail him, but tied him instead. Then, having placed his hands behind himself and having been bound, like a splendid ram chosen from a great flock for a sacrifice, a burnt offering prepared and acceptable to God, he looked up to heaven and said: "O Lord God Almighty, Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received knowledge of you, the God of angels and powers and of all creation, and of the whole race of the righteous who live in your presence, **2** I bless you because you have considered me worthy of this day and hour, so that I might receive

a place among the number of the martyrs in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and of body, in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit. May I be received among them in your presence today, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as you have prepared and revealed beforehand, and have now accomplished, you who are the undecieving and true God. **3** For this reason, indeed for all things, I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you, through the eternal and heavenly high priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom be glory to you, with him and the Holy Spirit, both now and for the ages to come. Amen."

*Death by Fire and Sword*

**15** When he had offered up the "Amen" and finished his prayer, the men in charge of the fire lit it. And as a mighty flame blazed up, we saw a miracle (we, that is, to whom it was given to see), and we have been preserved in order that we may tell the rest what happened. **2** For the fire, taking the shape of an arch, like the sail of a ship filled by the wind, completely surrounded the body of the martyr; and it was there in the middle, not like flesh burning but like bread baking or like gold and silver being refined in a furnace. For we also perceived a very fragrant aroma, as if it were the scent of incense or some other precious spice.

**16** When the lawless men eventually realized that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they ordered an executioner to go up to him and stab him with a dagger. And when he did this, there came

**13:2** *pyre* Some ancient authorities read *fire*. • *martyrdom* One ancient authority reads *gray hair appeared*.

out a dove and a large quantity of blood, so that it extinguished the fire; and the whole crowd was amazed that there should be so great a difference between the unbelievers and the elect. **2** This man was certainly one of the elect, the most remarkable Polycarp, who proved to be an apostolic and prophetic teacher in our own time, bishop of the catholic church in Smyrna. For every word that came from his mouth was accomplished and will be accomplished.

*Conflict over Polycarp's Body*

**17** But the jealous and envious Evil One, the adversary of the race of the righteous, when he observed the greatness of Polycarp's martyrdom and the irreproachable character of his life from the beginning, and realized that he was now crowned with the crown of immortality and had won a prize that no one could challenge, saw to it that not even his poor body should be taken away by us, even though many desired to do this and to touch his holy flesh. **2** So he incited Nicetes, the father of Herod and brother of Alee, to appeal to the magistrate not to hand over his body, "or else," he said, "they may abandon the crucified one and begin to worship this man." All this was done at the instigation and insistence of the Jews, who even watched when we were about to take the body from the fire. They did not know that we will never be able either to abandon the Christ who suffered for the salvation of the whole world of those who are saved, the blameless on behalf of sinners, or to worship anyone else. **3** For we worship this one, who is the Son of God, but the martyrs we love as disciples and imitators of the Lord, as they deserve,

**16.1 a dove and** One ancient authority omits. **16.2 remarkable** Some ancient authorities read *remarkable martyr*. • *catholic* Some ancient authorities read *holy*. **17.1 to touch** Or *to commune with*, or possibly *to receive a part of*, i.e., as a relic.

on account of their matchless devotion to their own King and Teacher. May we also become their partners and fellow disciples!

**18** The centurion, therefore, seeing the opposition raised by the Jews, set Polycarp's body in the middle and cremated it, as is their custom. **2** And so later on we took up his bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold, and deposited them in a suitable place. **3** There, when we gather together as we are able, with joy and gladness, the Lord will permit us to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom in commemoration of those who have already fought in the contest and also for the training and preparation of those who will do so in the future.

*Summary: A Martyrdom in Accord with the Gospel*

**19** Such is the story of the blessed Polycarp. Although he (together with those from Philadelphia) was the twelfth person martyred in Smyrna, he alone is especially remembered by everyone, so that he is spoken of everywhere, even by pagans. He proved to be not only a distinguished teacher but also an outstanding martyr whose martyrdom all desire to imitate since it was in accord with the pattern of the gospel of Christ. **2** By his endurance he defeated the unrighteous magistrate and so received the crown of immortality; now he rejoices with the apostles and all the righteous, and glorifies the almighty God and Father, and blesses our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls and Helmsman of our bodies and Shepherd of the catholic church throughout the world.