

Polycarp

Written by adapted

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In 155, Polycarp, the aged bishop of Smyrna, was summoned before the proconsul and charged with being a Christian. "Swear," the magistrate urged him in an effort to make him affirm his loyalty and so bring about his release, "Curse Christ." "Eighty and six years," Polycarp replied, "have I served him, and he has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my king who has saved me?" "I have wild beasts," the proconsul threatened; "if you don't repent I will have you thrown to them." Polycarp responded, "Send for them."

In despair at the bishop's obduracy the magistrate told him, "if you don't despise the wild beasts I will order that you be burned alive." "You threaten the fire," Polycarp told him, "that burns for an hour and in a little while will be quenched; but you are unaware of the fire of the judgment to come, and the fire of eternal punishment which is kept for the ungodly." Under pressure from the clamor of the mob, the proconsul gave orders for Polycarp to be burned to death. Twenty-two years further on in history, many Christians, some of them migrants from Asia, died in the arena in Lyons France fighting wild beasts in the public games. Love for Christ has no fears.

-A New History of Christianity