**23 February**

**Polycarp**

**Bishop of Smyrna,**

**Martyr c.155**

Almighty God, who gave to your servant Polycarp, boldness to confess the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ before the rulers of this world and courage to die for his faith: grant that we also may be ready to give an answer for the faith that is in us and to suffer gladly for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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 Church of England

**23 February**

**Polycarp**

**Bishop of Smyrna,**

**Martyr**

Honoured as one of the first Christian martyrs, Polycarp had been Bishop of Smyrna on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor for over forty years when the persecution of Christians began. He was arrested and given the option to renounce his faith and so save his life. His response was: ‘I have been Christ’s servant for eighty-six years and he has done me no harm. Can I now blaspheme my King and my Saviour?’ He was immediately burnt at the stake. His remains were gathered together and buried outside the city; thus began the practice of celebrating the Eucharist over his burial place on the anniversary of his death, a practice which also grew over the martyrs’ tombs in the Roman catacombs. Polycarp died in the year 155.

*Sourced from ‘Exciting Holiness’*

**27 February**

**George Herbert**

**Priest, Poet 1633**

King of glory, King of peace,

who called your servant George Herbert

from the pursuit of worldly honours to be

a priest in the temple of his God and King: grant us also the grace to offer ourselves

with singleness of heart in humble

obedience to your service; through

Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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**27 February**

**George Herbert**

**Priest, Poet**

Born in 1593 into the aristocratic Pembroke family, George Herbert went up to Cambridge in 1614, eventually becoming a fellow of Trinity College. At the age of twenty-five, he became a Public Orator in the University and then a Member of Parliament, apparently destined for a life at court. To everyone’s surprise, he decided to be ordained and, after spending a time with his friend Nicholas Ferrar at Little Gidding, he was made deacon in 1626. He married in 1629, was priested in 1630 and given the care of souls of the parish of Bemerton, near Salisbury, where he spent the rest of his short life. He wrote prolifically, his hymns still being popular throughout the English-speaking world. His treatise, *The Country Parson*, on the priestly life, and his poetry, especially *The Temple*, earned Herbert a leading place in English literature. He never neglected the care of the souls of Bemerton, however, and encouraged attendance at the weekday recitation of the daily office, calling to mind the words of his hymn, ‘Seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee’. He died on 1 March 1633 and was buried in his church at Bemerton two days later.

*Sourced from ‘Exciting Holines’*