Saint of the Week

Irenaeus
c. 125 – 202
Feast Day—June 28

This early Christian theologian passed on the apostolic tradition to a new generation as he helped evangelize France. Born in Asia Minor, possibly at Smyrna, Irenaeus was taught by St. Polycarp, a pupil of St. John the Apostle. Sent to Gaul as a missionary, he served as a priest under St. Pothinus of Lyons, a martyr whom he succeeded as bishop of the large market city on the Rhone. Irenaeus continued to spread the Gospel and opposed the gnostic heresy, writing a five-book treatise that is extant. During a 20-year episcopate, he spoke the language of Gaul instead of his native Greek, and worked hard to identify with his people. Little else is known about his life or death.

“Here too there is a very beautiful central idea of St Irenaeus: We must get used to perceiving God. God is generally remote from our lives, from our ideas, from our actions. He has come to us and we must accustom ourselves to being with God. And Irenaeus dares boldly to say that God must also accustom himself to being with us and within us.”

—Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience,