

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, June 4, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“St. Boniface of Mainz”

READING: Psalm 16:1-4 – Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the Lord, “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.” As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.

My “Pastor’s Desk Calendar” comes from Concordia Publishing House and it is designed specifically for Missouri Synod Pastors. I have every calendar I have used dating from 1991. They haven’t changed a whole lot, and I am glad, for that calendar is one of my most important tools. I would literally be lost without it. It keeps all my appointments and engagements before my eyes and uppermost in my mind.

So I looked at my calendar to see what was on tap for today. While I was looking, I also took a peek at tomorrow. Guess what I found? Tomorrow, June 5, is the Saint’s day for St. Boniface of Mainz, Missionary to the Germans! Imagine that! That’s the guy who ventured into the wilds of northern Europe and had the courage to evangelize the barbarians feared by the Romans as well as the Goths and Huns and the Franks.

He was born and raised in Britania, joined the Benedictine order as a monk. In the year 716, he sailed across to what was later Belgium, never to return to his homeland. He spent a year working with a missionary there. From there he went to the Germanic lands of Frisia. The story goes that there he found the local people worshipping pagan gods at the “Donar Oak” (sometimes Latinized to the “Jupiter Oak”). He took an axe, began to chop it down, and the wind came up and finished the job. The locals saw that he was not struck down by their gods and converted to Christianity. He made a total of three trips to Rome. On the second trip Pope Gregory III ordained him archbishop of all the Germanic lands. On a journey through Frisia in 754 AD, he and 53 companions were surrounded by a large company of bandits who killed all of them for what they supposed were chests full of valuables. After the killing stopped, they discovered only clothes and books in the chests. Boniface was interred in a monastery chapel and remains there to this day.

What struck me about this story is the thought that by the courage and faithfulness of this one man, Christianity came to the Germanic lands. It is quite possible that one or several of my direct forebearers was converted to the Faith by Boniface, and that Faith was passed down generation to generation until it came to rest with me. Who alone but God knows?

Now, we Lutherans don’t get quite as excited about “The Saints” as our Roman Catholic friends do. They have hundreds and hundreds of canonized people, and they continue to canonize saints to this very day. It is good for us to hear and know the stories of the heroes of the Faith. They can energize and encourage us to lift high the cross in our day. But our definition of “saint” is less “superhero” and more “faithful disciple”. When the Psalmist in our reading for today says, “As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight,” he is talking not about those few who dare great things for God, but about those who faithfully and diligently serve, worship, and love the Lord day after day in the vocation to which they have been called.

Not everyone finds themselves prepared and inclined to sail to exotic locales and distant shores to serve as a missionary. Not all of us are called to be evangelists, pastors, or teachers. But when you and I put in a good word for Jesus to our friends, neighbors, and workmates, when we help and serve others without thought of repayment or reward, when we regularly read, study, and hear the Word of God and then do our

best to put it into practice, we are "...the saints who are in the land...", and we are among those in whom the Lord takes great delight.

Remember the Latin phrase I have encouraged you to memorize? "Simul justus et peccator." – "We are at the same time saint and sinner." "Justus" is the Latin word for "saint". Can you see or hear the connection there? Saints are those who are "justified" before God, and your basic catechism instruction reminds you that we are "justified by faith in Christ alone." So, the saints in the land are those who put their whole trust in Christ Jesus and are justified before the Heavenly Father for Jesus' sake.

I am glad to have learned a little about St. Boniface, "Missionary to the Germans". Since I know a lot of German-Americans, and even a few German Germans, I am gratified to know that the faith I learned at St. Michael's Lutheran School, Frankenhilf, Michigan, may very well have gotten its start in the 8th Century when an English monk dared to go where many feared to tread. Those Germans were a scary, violent, superstitious lot. Boniface had his work cut out for him, that's a fact. But the Word of God is a living, powerful, life-changing word that points to one man, Son of God, who faced all things, endured all things, so that we might have life in his name. Thanks be to Jesus! Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1) Pastor Woods is back from his vacation and eager to make preparations for V.B.S. and so can use our help. He will be in the gym most Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Come give him your help in whatever time you are able.
- 2) **GOLDEN SAINTS LUNCHEON:** This Thursday, June 6, there will be a luncheon after the Thursday Saints Bible Class. You are invited to sign up at the office, then bring a dish to pass. I will provide the meat, the table service, and the beverages. Come, have a good meal and enjoy the fellowship of others of a "Golden Hue"!