

Saints & Heroes

Cynethryth, the mother of Dunstan of Canterbury

Sometime in the tenth century, a woman stood in a church. A chronicler would later record: 'She was in the church of St Mary on Candleday, when all the lights were suddenly extinguished. Then the candle held by Cynethryth was as suddenly relighted, and all present lit their candles at this flame, thus foreshadowing that the boy "would be the minister of eternal light" to the Church of England.' Dunstan's life would certainly not lack drama or heroism, facing down debauched monarchs and sowing seed for monastic revival in these lands, having been influenced by new Benedictine communities in Flanders, during one of his periods of exile and ill-favour from the Royal Court. He was, from a very early age, a skilled craftsman and artist, a skill nourished by monastic life, but which drew on his innate talent. In childhood he endured near-fatal illness, but after recovery received his parents encouragement to be tonsured and receive minor orders. Among his last acts was to crown King Aethelred, and prophesy the misfortunes that would befall that reign. But it is something to ponder the prayers of an expectant mother, and to think about how they would have been the primary influence upon his life.

Collect for St Dunstan

All-powerful God, who made St Dunstan a bishop and leader of the Church in England to inspire your people with his teaching and example; may we give fitting honour to his memory and always have the assistance of his prayers; this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

FROM THE FATHERS

From a Homily by St Gregory of Nyssa (335-395)

When love has entirely cast out fear, and fear has been transformed into love, then the unity brought us by our Saviour will be fully realised, for all men will be united with one another through their union with the one supreme Good.

Our Lord having conferred all power on his disciples by his blessing, obtained many other gifts for them by his prayer to the Father. Among these was included the greatest gift of all, which was that they were all to be united to the one supreme Good. To quote the gospel itself. I pray, the Lord says, that they all may be one; that as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, so they also may be one in us.

Now the bond that creates this unity is glory. That the Holy Spirit is called glory no one can deny if he thinks carefully about the Lord's words: The glory you gave to me, I have given to them. In fact, he gave this glory to his disciples when he said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit. When our Saviour's human nature had been glorified by the Spirit, the glory of the Spirit was passed on to all his kin, beginning with his disciples. This is why he said: The glory you gave to me, I have given to them, so that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, I want them to be perfectly one.

16th May
2021

7th Sunday of Easter
(Sunday after
Ascension Day)

BELONG TO THE WORLD NO MORE



'The world' (in Greek, 'cosmos') is often used in St John's Gospel to mean everything that is dislocated from God, separated from him by sin. 'Cosmos' is shorthand for all that stands in need of healing, restoration, and raising up. It also represents that which stands opposed to the salvific purposes of God. Into this fallen-away reality the Creator of all things entered in his holy incarnation. Yet the world, blind to this, murderously kills God upon the cross of shame. But Divine Love is greater and gains the victory. The death & resurrection of Christ is the vanquishing of the sovereignties of sin; the cross overthrows 'the Prince of this world.' What was separated from God by sin is now, by the Paschal Mystery, reconciled to him in Christ. Today we hear the Lord speaking to us that we, the Church, 'belong to the world no more than I belong to the world.' This is repeated in the passage precisely so that we might appreciate its radical truth. If we believe in the Word made Flesh and abide in him like branches to a vine, if we now inhabit the communion of his Holy Church, if we live in-dwellingly with Christ in the sacramental life, then, yes, we are *in* the world, but no longer *of* the world, no longer do we 'belong' to it. We have been rescued, redeemed, raised up – called out ('ecclesia') of the world - to fullest life in Christ.