

All Saints, Sunday, 4th July



Today we remember all Saints of Britain, Russia, Greece and, indeed, of the whole world. We remember, honour and praise them because of their example, as followers of Christ, and because, those who were successors of the Apostles, brought the Faith to this country. Our Lord's command to the Apostles was to go out into all nations, baptising in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and to do this remembering that they were never alone, Our Lord being with them always, even to the end of time.

The Saints were of all walks of life, fishermen, tax collectors, many scholars and many unlearned peasants. St Paul was a very determined Pharisee, St Luke, a physician. Not all had led a good life. St Godric of Northumberland is said to have been a pirate, Mary Magdalene had seven devils cast from her, and we know in detail of the life of Mary of Egypt. Yet all had a moment in their lives when they were fully converted to the Lord. In our own time, we know of Metropolitan Anthony, who some regard as a Saint, as a youth had no time for Christ until, one day reading the Gospel of Mark, he was aware of Christ's presence with him, and this was his moment of enduring conversion. In my own experience I have been aware of several others who also had a powerful experience of the presence of Christ, and from then on, their lives were changed. One of these had followed Satanist practises for many years and yet, Christ came to him and he became a very devout Orthodox Christian. Another, whilst in the bathroom, saw the image of Christ, indeed an icon of Christ in the mirror. This experience of Christ, first-hand, was there for the Apostles because they had lived with him on earth, but for others, including ourselves, by meeting and being inspired by the Risen Ascended Lord. By this enlightening they were lifted up on the wings of Christ's love and could never turn back. His presence with them and the fullness of the Holy Spirit, empowering them, gave guidance and strength and the determination to do His Will. They were led on in faith to accept whatever the life-changes were necessary and whatever the personal cost.

Our patron Aidan travelled by foot from Iona to Lindisfarne and then travelled on foot to all parts of Northern England. Chad, his pupil at the Lindisfarne school Aidan had established, became a priest and missionary and became the first know bishop of the Midlands. Sadly, we do not know the names of bishops before him, but the British people before Augustine and Aidan had already received the Christian faith. Indeed, it may be that Joseph of Arimathea did visit Cornwall as a tin-merchant and it

may be that he brought his adventurous nephew Jesus with him on one of these journeys; '*And did those feet in ancient times walk upon England's mountains green.*'

Through the Apostles and the Saints, Our Lord was able to bring the knowledge of Himself and experience of Him into the lives of all nations, making the Light of the Holy Trinity shine upon them and us, whilst all error was chased away. With the Light of God's Grace, the Saints made the whole world radiant with God's glory. For this we are so thankful.

This challenge and enlightenment for us, as we pray and read the scriptures is the life-changing experience the Saints have given us and continue to do so by their prayers and heavenly guidance. The hymns of Pentecost and St Paul's epistles relate this:

'The All-Holy Spirit, who distributes divine gifts all over the world, has appeared... (and) now His whole being has been poured out on all (of us) through the mediation of Christ. Take not the All-Holy Spirit out of us, O Lover of Mankind, but grant your grace, Lord, that our souls and hearts may be made worthy of You.... May we become the temple and dwelling of the Holy Paraclete.' *'Surrounded by so great a crowd of witnesses.'*

Fr David

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