

THE CONGRESS OF TRADITIONAL ANGLICANS

June 1–4, 2011 - Victoria, BC, Canada

An Address by

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At the Holy Eucharist - In Remembrance of Anglican Saints

Saturday, June 4, 2011

SERMON:

COMMEMORATION OF THE SAINTS OF THE ANGLICAN TRADITION

Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest (John 4:35 John); If any man speak, let him speak, as the oracles of God. (1 Peter 4.11)

In the Gospel for tomorrow (1st Sunday after the Ascension) John 15:26ff: Jesus said to His disciples: ‘when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye shall bear witness....’ And further at 16:2 our Lord prepares the disciples to be put out of the synagogues— ‘whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service.’

The Comforter along with the oracles of God, give by faith, the inspiration, motivation and sustenance to the Communion of saints.

The faith of the Saints, many of them Martyrs by death, or by persecution, some put out of synagogues, witnesses to the eternal Word of God, With eyes lifted up, looking into the fields white, they participate in the Lord’s harvest, gathering souls.

Anglican Saints of the Church in England, and of the Church of England, and its sister churches of the former British Empire, and the Churches of the Anglican Continuum, are called to harvest spiritually. A unique contribution to the mission of Christ’s Kingdom on earth has been made by them, and continues to be made, in the peculiar Anglican ethos so admired by many of the brethren in other Communion.

As Christ filled saints sent of God to sow the message of salvation through our Lord Jesus, and in humble obedience to God they labour in Christ’s vineyard. The faith once received drives missionary zeal for spreading the Word of God where ever they go for the conversion and salvation of souls, age abiding.

However there are challenges. Generally, the people are trapped in rampant consumerism and in secularism, to coin a phrase. The attainment of temporalities, often with hefty mortgages and

credit card debt has made slaves of many of us to debt service. Political correctness also takes its toll.

As an aside, continuing Anglicans have learnt to forgo the temporalities of their former allegiances. This is healthy because the circumstances bring us into a closer relationship with each other and with God. There is persecution of course and this of itself can cause us to seek our Lord's strengthening in the faith and in fellowship.

Ever since the Gospel came to Britain in Apostolic times, Anglican saints have been raised up by God to seek a rule of life. In the post Reformation era two important 'rules' come to mind. John and Charles Wesley upholding the rule of life in the offices of the Book of Common Prayer, and the Oxford Movement, the same plus the use of the Missal for Holy Mass, and also the missionary work of the ABM, the CMS, and similar societies sending missionary saints to the four corners of the earth to raise up men in Christ of every ethnicity, even to harvest souls in white fields.

It would be a sin to favour one saint above another but one is tempted to consider why Anglican saints have been instrumental in harvesting souls for two thousand years.

For starters, I'd like to name St. Patrick for the Anglican Church. Born at Kilpatrick (in Gaelic cill Padraig 'church of Patrick') near Dumbarton, on the Clyde estuary of Scotland AD 387. The Almighty destined Patrick to be the Apostle of Ireland, going to glory at Saul, Downpatrick, Ireland, 17 March, AD461. Bearing in mind that Augustine arrived in Canterbury two centuries later, we recognise a Gaelic Celt Saint worthy of honour in the name of Clan Kilpatrick.

The wonderful symmetry of the providence of God the Creator of all that is, can be seen in the provision of missionaries from Ireland to strengthen the faith once received; in Scotland, England and Wales and onward to Western Europe.

Columba was born in modern Donegal, part of the Province of Ulster North Ireland, he was destined by God to become the apostle to the Picts. St. Patrick's ministry had put an end to the Druidic tradition in Ireland. Ireland became the launching pad for missionary monks. Twelve students who studied under St. Finian became known as the Twelve Apostles of Ireland. Columba was one of these. He, a monk, was ordained a priest. During his lifetime on earth he founded a number of monasteries, including those at Kells, Derry, and Swords.

Tradition asserts that, sometime around AD560, (forty years or so before St. Augustine arrive at Canterbury) St. Columba became involved in a quarrel with Finian over a Psalter. Columba copied the manuscript under St. Finian, intending to keep the copy. St. Finian disputed his right to keep the copy. The dispute eventually led to the pitched Battle of Cúl Dreim-hne in AD561, during which many men were killed. A synod of clerics and scholars threatened to excommunicate Columba for these deaths, but St. Brendan spoke on his behalf with the result that he was allowed to go into exile instead. Columba himself suggested that he should work as a missionary in Scotland to help convert as many people as had been killed in the battle, some 3,000 souls. He settled on Iona. God alone knows how many souls were harvested. Hundreds of thousands I believe.

Much more followed, by God's providence. St. Aidan, an Irish born monk serving the Lord at Iona, was sent to Northumbria at the request of King Oswald to convert his subjects from their predominant Saxon pagan practices. Blessed St. Aidan chose Lindisfarne an Island like Iona as his mission home base, and nearby Bamburgh fortress, as the seat of his diocese.

An inspired missionary, Aidan walked from one village to another, politely conversing with people he saw and slowly interesting them in Christianity by speaking the Gospel of Salvation and living it. One step at a time the monks speaking of Christ and His oracles, raised up men in Christ in the Northumbrian communities. The features of the Anglican mission work should be noted. Evangelism started from a religious community to the Northumbrian communities; Evangelism primarily by walking around. The Word of God given directly from Scripture to folk most of whom were illiterate. Talking the Word of God—talking to people about the love of Almighty God in Christ, crucified, resurrected and ascended. That God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son that whoso believeth, believeth on Him, should not perish, should not perish but have everlasting life, life everlasting, have everlasting life.

Such is the model for Anglican Evangelism. St. Aidan disciplined twelve English boys to train at the monastery. The model of discipling disciples to disciple souls for Christ. It works. Jesus did it first. The communities Aidan founded grew and helped found churches and religious communities throughout Northumbria. Lindisfarne became a centre of learning and a storehouse of scholarly knowledge.

By the late 7th and early 8th century St. Boniface (formerly Winifrid renamed Boniface for his missionary zeal) born in Devonshire missionary to East Friesland in the modern Federal State of Bremen, Germany.

He was disciple by St. Willibrord the Northumbrian born, saint to the Frisians in the modern Nederland. The evangelising of Western Europe was in process by Anglican saints under the guidance of the Holy Spirit Himself disseminating God's Word.

The common thread, indeed the golden tread of the Anglican way, is sewn with the Word of God. In a literate society such as ours, the amazing thing is that everyone who reads the Bible has the same thing to say about it. In every land, in every language, it is the same tale too. Where the Ancient and more Ancient Scriptures are read, not with eyes only, but with the mind and heart, life is changed. Sad become glad, sinful are transformed, those in the dark walk in the light of Christ. (Carmichael)

These writings, this Bible, this Word, this book of the oracles of God have such mighty power if it gets a chance to work in the honest heart. Read it freely and the truth sets us free. The amazing thing is that when the Bible is preached in its fullness, in every land, in every language, it is the same tale. Conversion to Christ!

There is no doubt in my mind, proven by historical record, that God has laid on Anglicans, a peculiar people, even since the time of the Apostles, the Gospel of salvation and that He has chosen Anglicans especially as the translators of His word into the language most common

around the world today. The Bible along with the Book of Common Prayer, enables the worship of God in the beauty of holiness.

Given that Bible societies have translated the oracles into just about every language, we still have a special place and responsibility in God's kingdom. This is especially the case in the West. Anglican means English. The Word of God in English has enormous power to reach the biblically illiterate.

- Step One: Form communities dedicated to Christ and His word, be they missions, house churches or parishes.
- Step Two: Make Bible literacy a rule of the community.
- Step Three: Partake of the Sacraments regularly.
- Step Four: Take a day of rest. Real rest, close down the chatter of the world. Turn off all appliances, recreate, reading the Scriptures and sharing with brethren the way God has recently worked in our lives.
- Step Five: Pool resources to help overcome the temptations of materialism. At the same time raise men out of poverty into skilled livelihoods. Encourage Christian, God centred, family life.
- Step Six: Disciple men and women to prepare them as harvesters.
- Step Seven: Celebrate the Lord's day, worshipping in the beauty of holiness, receiving the blessed Body and Blood of Christ, and go out into the streets and byways to speak the oracles of God and to introduce all folk to the promises of Christ in His Word.

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