

About Saint Augustine of Canterbury

Christianity began early in British history, but was largely suppressed by the pagan Anglo-Saxon invasions that took place during the fifth and sixth centuries. It remained alive in the far west, which remained British because it was too remote and inaccessible for the invaders to attack.

There is a story that goes that Pope Gregory the Great saw some fair-headed Anglo-Saxon slaves who were going to be sold in a market in Rome. After asking where they were from he replied: *non Angli, sed angeli* – “not Angles, but angels”. He was determined to convert them to Christianity.

Pope Gregory organized a group of thirty monks to travel to south-eastern England to evangelize the people there. He chose Augustine of Canterbury (not to be confused with Saint Augustine of Hippo), to be their leader. They landed in England in the year 597 and were welcomed by the king of Kent, Ethelbert, who became a Christian along with many of his subjects. Another group of missionaries arrived four years later. In the meantime, Augustine went to Arles in France, where he was consecrated Archbishop to the English. He then returned to Canterbury to set up the diocese. That diocese prospered and so he set up two more dioceses at London and at Rochester, Kent.

Saint Augustine of Canterbury

(Bishop)
27 May



What can we learn from Saint Augustine of Canterbury?

It is amazing how Augustine and his fellow monks were able to evangelize a group of people without the means of modern technology. In fact, the printing press had not been invented yet. These men were on fire for the Lord though and were determined to let people know Christ's Good News. It was a team effort however, and if it were not for Pope Gregory meeting those slaves perhaps England may not have been converted. Gregory gave their dignity back to those slaves.

In our time and place when bad news seems to dominate in the media, our task to proclaim the Gospel is even harder. We should take heart from Augustine and his companions though. Daily preserving for the sake of the Gospel is the way to go. We are not going to convert the whole world at once. But if we live our faith sincerely and with conviction we will have a chance at winning souls for Christ.

So often there are people in our hospital emergency departments and on our streets who “are not in the system”. They are homeless or have fled dangerous situations or maybe they themselves have succumbed to various vices. They too deserve dignity. Our encounter with them can be a moment of proclaiming the Gospel and returning their dignity to them, merely by a “hello”, a smile or buying them a warm drink.

The Collect

O God, who by the preaching of the Bishop Saint Augustine of Canterbury led the English peoples to the Gospel, grant, we pray, that the fruits of his labours may remain ever abundant in your Church. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading Matthew 9:35-37

The harvest is rich but the labourers are few
Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness.

And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest.'

Antiphon

O chosen people, proclaim the mighty works of him who called you out of darkness, into his wonderful light, alleluia.

Hymn for the Memorial of

Saint Augustine of Canterbury

Saint Augustine of Canterbury,

chosen by Gregory the Great,
the faith in England you did preach,
guiding the Angles on paths straight.

The king and his subjects became
followers of Christ because of you,
spreading the faith throughout the land,
proclaiming Christ - ways old and new.

A missionary at heart you were,
teaching the Faith in France as well;
the work of God met with success
so Christ in each heart there would dwell.

Saint Augustine, by us, like you,
may others to the Lord be led,
as we work in the Lord's harvest,
that all on Christ's word may be fed.

Text: Chris deSilva and Alessio Loiacono

Tune: LM; O Waly Waly

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Jerusalem Bible Translation of Scripture used in Australian Lectionary for Mass, Vols I, II and III (London: Collins Liturgical, 1981).

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