

A Cloud of Witnesses in the Orthodox West

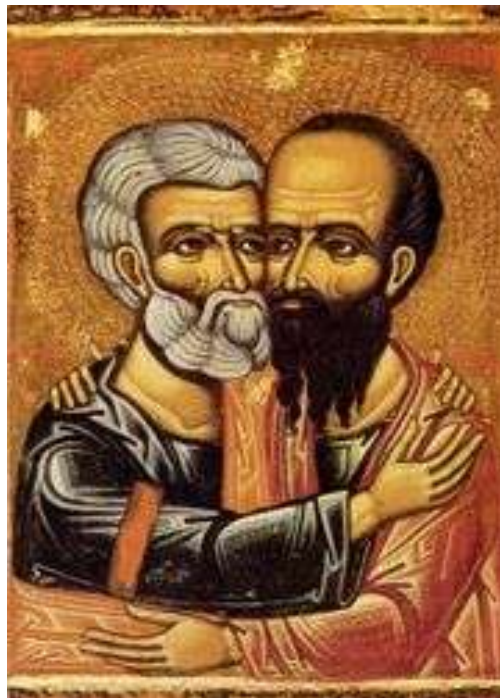
*An Introduction to the Saints of
the Orthodox Church in the West
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Towards the end of the Sermon on the Mount, while warning of false prophets to come, our Lord says “You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” Ultimately the answer to the question of whether the Western Rite is Orthodox or not is answered by how it affects the lives of the men, women and children who live out their relationship with God in this manner. Does the Western Rite, like the Eastern Rite, lead people to become holy, to grow in their relationship with God? Is the Western Rite an expression of authentic Christianity that encourages people to become more like Christ? In answer to these questions we should look at the lives of some of the “cloud of witnesses” as the holy ones are called in the Epistle to the Hebrews. By their fruit you will know them.

As we look at the expansion of Christianity into the West, we must start with what is now Italy. Rome, of course, was the capitol of the empire and was generally considered to

be the center of the world at the time. Jews had been living in Rome for nearly two hundred years before the birth of Christ. We know this because the Praetor Gnaeus Cornelius Hispanus tried to compel them to return to their homeland in 139BC. There may have been as many as 40-50,000 Jews living in Rome by the time of the first Christian missionaries. We know from the Acts of the Apostles that both Jerusalem and Antioch sent missionaries out in the early years of Christianity. There is good evidence that there were Jewish Christians living in Rome by the early 40's, within ten years of the death and resurrection of Christ. We are also told that there were Romans present at Pentecost when they heard the good news preached in their own language.



We do not know precisely who first brought the Christian message to Rome, but there was already a Christian community there by the time that Peter and Paul arrived. Peter and Paul are the patrons of the church in Antioch, but they are also the patrons of the church of Rome. Both gave their lives in witness, in martyrdom, in Rome around the year 65. Peter, after serving as bishop or overseer of the Church in Antioch for about eight years, led the church in Rome until he was crucified upside down in the Circus of Nero, south of the Vatican Hill (proclaiming his unworthiness to die in the same manner as Christ). Paul, the great missionary and teacher, could not be crucified as a Roman citizen and was beheaded on the Ostian Way. The great basilicas of St. Peter's on the Vatican Hill and St. Paul's outside the walls were built on the burial places of the saints.

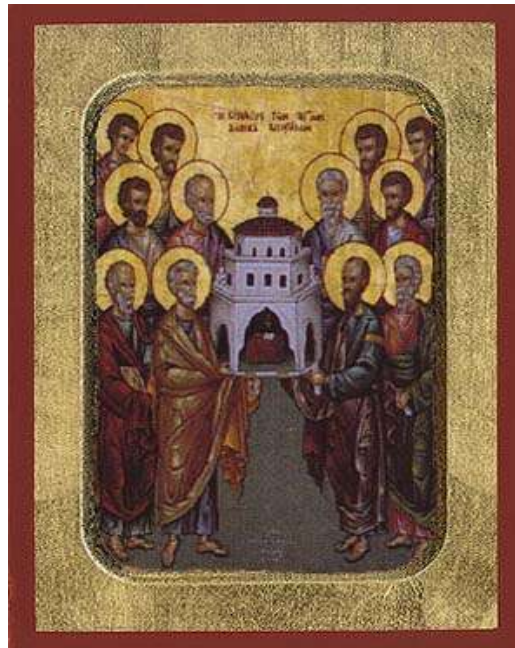


St. Ignatius of Antioch (who was also martyred in Rome about the year 107) and St. Clement (a companion of Paul and fourth bishop of Rome who was killed about the year 96) both wrote of Peter and Paul leading the church.



There is an ancient tradition that John Mark wrote his gospel for the Church in Rome, under the guidance of St. Peter, and we know that Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans to guide the church there.

By bringing the Christian Gospel to Rome, these early missionaries brought the good news to the heart of the world, and (to continue the medical analogy) from Rome the good news could be pumped out through the veins and arteries of Roman influence throughout the world. There were many times of persecution as the Roman emperors tried to stamp out Christianity. This made the church stronger, for as Tertullian proclaimed in Carthage, in North Africa in about the year 197, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” The example of these early Christians who were willing to give their lives in witness to Christ proved to be a compelling beacon that continually called others to examine what was so powerful, so precious, so meaningful that it was worth dying for.



There are innumerable Western saints whose lives we could examine. In Rome some of the most popular early saints and martyrs were commemorated in the Eucharistic prayer from early times in addition to the holy apostles: Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Laurence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmos and Damian - Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucia, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia. In the West we have a book called the *Martyrology*, which is similar to the *Synaxarion* in the East, which lists many saints to be commemorated on every day of the year. For this introduction, however, we will focus on a few saints from each area in the West and this in turn will help to show the faith present in those places.



In about the year 257 Sixtus II became Pope of Rome (the word *pope* is simply Latin for *papa* or *father*). Laurence was ordained as deacon at that time and given charge of church administration and the care of the poor. The following year persecutions began under the Emperor Valerian. Many Christian leaders were killed or sent into exile. On August 6th, St. Sixtus was taken out and beheaded. St. Ambrose of Milan tells us that on the way to his martyrdom Sixtus encountered Laurence, who asked "Where are you going, my dear father, without your son? Where are you hurrying off to, holy priest, without your deacon? Before you never mounted the altar of sacrifice without your servant, and now you wish to do it without me?" Sixtus prophesied, "after three days you will follow me". The Prefect of Rome then demanded that Laurence deliver the treasures of the church. Laurence asked for a period of three days to gather what was asked. He quickly gave everything away for the care of the poor and needy. Laurence then went with a small group to meet the Prefect, who demanded that the treasures be handed over. Laurence showed him those who were poor, crippled, blind and suffering and said that these were the true treasures of the church. It was ordered that Laurence be tortured to death over a fire, strapped to a grill. Before he died, he is said to have quipped to the executioner, "turn me over, this side is done." Laurence became one of the patrons of Rome and one of the most well loved saints. His feast day is August 10th.

The worst period of persecution came under the Emperor Diocletian, particularly around the years 303 and 304. As we read through the Calendar of Saints and the Martyrology we find many, many saints who died at this time. St. Agnes was a young woman, about twelve or thirteen years old. She came from a noble family of Christians. The Prefect Sempronius wanted her to marry his son. When she refused to marry a pagan,

the Prefect sentenced Agnes to death. Roman law did not allow for the execution of virgins, so he had her stripped and dragged naked to a brothel. There she was miraculously protected from defilement. They then took her out to be executed regardless of the law. They tried to burn her but the woodpile would not light, after which the commanding officer drew his sword and beheaded her. Her feast day is January 21st.



About the same time we encounter the life of St. Lucy. She also was a young Christian girl who was betrothed against her will to a pagan. Lucy had a considerable dowry but went around giving the gold and jewels away to care for the poor. When her intended groom was told that Lucy was giving her dowry away and that she had found a “more noble groom” (referring to Christ), he denounced her to the governor. Like St. Agnes, Lucy was sentenced to a brothel, but when the soldiers came to lead her away, it was said that she was so filled with the Holy Spirit that she was as heavy as a mountain. Some accounts say that they gouged her eyes out before she was stabbed with a dagger. The story concerning her eyes may have developed as her name ‘Lucy’ or ‘Lucia’ is similar to the Latin ‘lux’ or ‘light’ and she is often invoked as the patron of those with eye problems. At any rate, Agnes and Lucy are both examples of holy women who wished to be brides of Christ and who would not join themselves to pagans. Her feast day is December 13th.



That even young women would give their lives in this manner was further evidence to the world that this was a faith worth investigating. Shortly after this fiercest time of persecution, the Edict of Milan was signed in 313 by the Emperors Constantine and Licinius, establishing religious toleration in the Roman empire. Constantine's mother was St. Helena, who was, according to various accounts either from Bythinia in Asia Minor or from Colcester in England. What is certain, however, is that Helena was a Christian and had taught the faith to her son Constantine. It was St. Constantine who called the Council of Nicaea to respond to the heresy of Arianism. In 380 the Emperor Theodosius declared that the Nicene faith was the official faith of the empire, thus within the lifetime of some people Christianity had gone from being an outlawed and persecuted minority to being the official state religion. While this was a wonderful triumph in many ways, it also meant that there were more people who were luke-warm Christians or who were Christian because it was the politically expedient thing to do. After this time it was no longer common to find people shedding their blood in martyrdom for their faith. In place of this 'red' martyrdom, a new 'white' or bloodless form or martyrdom arose - monasticism.



As St. Anthony and many others went out into the deserts of Egypt to live lives of prayer and spiritual discipline, in the West many went out into the forests and wilderness. In the middle of the fourth century St. Basil the Great wrote his rule for the monastic life. In the West, it was St. Benedict who, building on the work of Basil and others, established the rule of monastic living. Benedict was born around the year 480. He had a twin sister, named Scholastica. The son of a noble family, at the age of about nineteen, in the midst of his studies, Benedict began to compare the life laid out for him and his friends with the life he encountered in reading the gospels. He chose the latter and left Rome. He went about forty miles to Subiaco, where he met a monk named Romanus and discussed his reason for seeking a different life. Benedict then lived as a hermit for the next three years. A nearby monastery asked him to come be their abbot. Benedict proved to be much stricter than these monks, however, and before long someone tried to poison him. Benedict made the sign of the cross over the poisoned vessel, drank what was in the cup, prayed for the monks who had tried to poison him and left. Many more people came to learn from this holy man, so Benedict built twelve monasteries in the area, each with an abbot and twelve monks. He composed his famous monastic rule, the Rule of St. Benedict, which subsequently became the principal guide for monastic life in the West. His rule explains both how to live the spiritual, Christ-centered life on earth and how to effectively run a monastery and organize the times of prayer. His approach to monastic life is often summarized as “*ora et labora*”, or “pray and work.” He died on March 21st, 547 and that day is now kept as one of his feast days. His sister, St. Scholastica, also entered the monastic life and was the abbess of a community about five miles away from Benedict’s community at Monte Cassino. Her feast day is February 10th.



The chief biographer of St. Benedict was St. Gregory and this will bring us to the last of the Roman saints for this presentation. Gregory was born about the year 550 to a well-to-do family. His great-grandfather was Pope Felix III. Gregory received the best education of the day. By the time he was 23 years old, he was Prefect of the city, the highest civil dignitary in Rome, president of the senate with supreme civil jurisdiction within a hundred miles of Rome, in charge of grain supplies, aqueducts, sewers, and finance. The following year his father died and Gregory decided to leave his office to become a monk and (in Gregory's own words) to follow "the grace of conversion that he had put off for a long time." He turned his family home on the Coelian Hill into a monastery dedicated to St. Andrew, provided for six other monasteries to be built on family land in Sicily, and gave the remainder of his inheritance to the poor. He spent his time as a simple monk, devoted to prayer, meditation, and study. He acquired a profound knowledge of scripture and the writings of the Latin fathers. He often spoke of this time as the happiest period of his life.

Pope Pelagius II had other plans, however, and called Gregory out of the monastery and ordained him as a deacon, then sent him as papal legate to Constantinople for seven years. When he returned, Gregory served as a papal counselor for four years, till upon the death of Pelagius, he was elected to be the next Pope, though he was still only a deacon. He tried to refuse and fled, till a fiery column from heaven pointed him out to those who sought him. Gregory was known as a wise theologian and a caring pastor. He reorganized the Roman liturgy, removing what had been added in recent centuries and he codified the chant of the church, hence we speak of the Liturgy of St. Gregory and Gregorian chant. In the East Gregory is credited with the authorship of the pre-sanctified liturgy, though it may have been that he simply introduced the idea while in Constantinople (from ancient

times the West has celebrated the pre-sanctified only once each year, on Good Friday). We are blessed to have many of the sermons and other writings of Gregory to guide us today. Gregory called himself “the servant of the servants of God” and protested when the Patriarch of Constantinople began to call himself the “ecumenical” Patriarch. Gregory thought that a claim of universal primacy was being made. In reply Gregory said, “whoever calls himself, or desires to be called, Universal Priest, is in his elation the precursor of Antichrist, because he proudly puts himself above all others.” We will return to Gregory in a few minutes as we discuss the history of the church in England. Gregory died in 604 and his feast day is March 12th. While it is difficult to leave Italy without discussing the lives of St. Ambrose, St. Leo and so many others, our space is limited and so we need to move on. For now, we simply encourage you to continue to read the lives of these holy saints.



As the faith spread outward from Rome in the West, it soon came to what we now know as France. Gaul, as it was known at the time, was one of the provinces of the Roman Empire. There is an old tradition that Mary, Martha and Lazarus of Bethany set sail from the holy land and landed near Arles. Lazarus was said to have been the first bishop of the new Christian community in Marseille.



In the second century we encounter St. Irenaeus of Lyon. Irenaeus was a student of St. Polycarp who was martyred in Rome in 155. Polycarp in turn was a student of St. John the beloved disciple (here we see a clear example of apostolic succession and passing on the faith of the apostles from generation to generation). About the year 180 Irenaeus wrote his best-known book entitled “Against the Heresies,” a detailed attack on the heresy of Gnosticism. Like St. Ignatius of Antioch before him, Irenaeus wrote of the importance of the authority of the bishops. True wisdom and guidance comes not from hidden or secret knowledge, as the Gnostics claimed, but from the councils of bishops led openly by the Holy Spirit. Irenaeus may have been the first to write of how the obedience of Mary overcame the disobedience of Eve. He also wrote “The only true and steadfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, through his transcendent love, became what we are, that he might bring us to be what he is himself.” Others have simplified this, saying of Christ, “He became what we are, that we might become what He is.” We know little about Irenaeus’ death around the year 202, though he has long been venerated as a martyr. His feast day is June 28th.

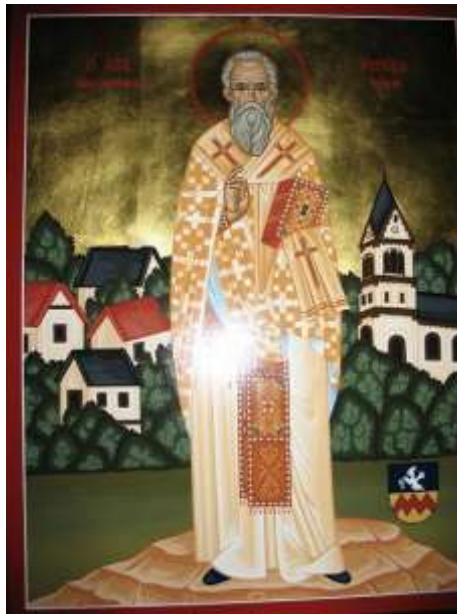


About the year 300 a boy was born in Poitiers to a pagan family. They named him ‘Hilary’ (from the Greek word for happy or cheerful). He received a good education in Philosophy, but then encountered the Christian Scriptures and converted with his wife to the Christian faith. When a new bishop was needed for Poitier in 353, the people unanimously elected Hilary, despite growing support for clerical celibacy. Even after the Council of Nicaea, Arianism was a major threat to the church in the West in the fourth century. In many ways, Hilary became the ‘Athanasius of the West.’ He was called the ‘Hammer of the Arians.’ Like Athanasius, he was sent off into exile when he would not embrace compromise for the sake of peace. While in exile he worked to translate the subbtle but important points of some of the Greek works against Arianism into Latin. Eventually he was allowed to return to Poitiers where he continued to argue against his opponents. He died in 367 and we keep his feast day on January 14th.



St. Martin was born in what is now Hungary. His father was an officer in the

Roman army and when Martin was ten, he visited a Christian Church against his father's wishes and became a catechumen. While Christianity was legal by this point, the cult of Mithras was still more popular within the army. When he was fifteen Martin was required to begin military service himself. He was serving near Amiens in Gaul when he saw a beggar by the gates of the city. Martin took his military cloak and cut it in half, giving half to the beggar. That night Martin dreamed and saw Jesus wearing the half of the cloak he had given away. Then he heard Jesus say to the angels: "Here is Martin, the Roman soldier who is not baptized; he has clad me." Martin was then baptized and served in the army for two more years before his faith led him to seek a different life. He became a disciple of St. Hilary of Poitiers and helped in the fight against Arianism. He became bishop of Tours in 371, where the people were amazed at the enthusiasm with which he had pagan shrines and temples destroyed. He established a monastery near the city where he lived out his days. He died in 397 and his feast day is November 11th; at one point the pre-Christmas fast began on St. Martin's day in the West and it was called St. Martin's Lent.



St. Remigius is often called the 'Apostle to the Franks.' At the age of twenty-two and while still a layman, Remigius was elected as bishop of Reims, as he was so respected for his learning and holiness of life. Remigius befriended Clovis, the king of the Franks and his wife, Clotilde. Clotilde was a Christian, but Clovis was a pagan until he embraced Christianity following a battle near Tolbiac. In a moment of desperation Clovis had called out to the God who his wife declared to be the "Son of the Living God" and he was victorious. Remigius baptized Clovis on December 24th, 496. As he was led into the church following his baptism, seeing the church ablaze with candles and hearing the solemn chanting of psalms, Clovis asked Remigius, "Father is this the heaven of which you spoke?" "No," answered the bishop; "but it is the beginning of the way to it." Some three thousand

of the Frankish people were then baptized along with Clovis. We celebrate the feast day of St. Remigius on October 1st and of St. Clotilde on June 3rd.



About the same time there was a peasant girl named Genevieve who met St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, and told him that she wished to live only for God. She became a nun at the age of fifteen; she was known for her piety and for caring for those in need (not to mention her vegetarian diet which was certainly strange in those days). St. Germanus appointed her to be in charge of the consecrated virgins of the city of Auxerre. When the Huns threatened Paris in 451, the prayers of Genevieve were said to have diverted the attack elsewhere. Later in 464, when Childeric besieged Paris, Genevieve was able to pass through the siege lines and bring food to the city. Still later, Clovis liberated captives at her request and built a monastery where she lived out her days. She died in 512 and her feast day is January 3rd.

Moving on now to the British Isles, there are wonderful, romantic old legends that the Christ child was brought to Britain in the so-called 'hidden years' between the flight to Egypt and the finding in the temple when Christ was twelve years old. This story led to the words of the poet William Blake in the work entitled *Jerusalem*, "And did those feet in ancient times, walk upon England's mountain green, and was the holy lamb of God on England's pleasant pasture seen..." There is also the legend that St. Joseph of Arimathea brought the Holy Grail to Glastonbury and this, in turn, became part of the legends surrounding King Arthur and his knights.



With greater certainty, we can say that Christianity was brought to Britain by traders, as early as the first century, traveling along established routes. Roman soldiers were in Britain in the first century and there was an established trade with tin being sent from Cornwall to Rome. The earliest written evidence for Christianity in Britain comes from Tertullian in North Africa, about the year 200, in which he described "all the limits of the Spains, and the diverse nations of the Gauls, and the haunts of the Britons, inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ." And Hippolytus of Rome, who died in about 236 said that Aristobulus, one of the Seventy sent out by Christ and brother of Barnabas, came to Britain and may have been the first missionary and bishop.



The first martyr in Britain was St. Alban. Alban was a pagan living near the Roman town of Verulamium, which was later renamed St. Albans. Alban gave shelter to a Christian priest and was baptized by him. When the Roman soldiers came looking for the priest, Alban exchanged clothing with the priest and gave himself up in place of the priest, so that the priest could continue to preach the gospel. Alban was beheaded about the year 209 on a nearby hill, the place where St. Alban's Cathedral now stands. His feast day is June 22nd.



St. Patrick came from a Christian family of Romanized Britons, and as we will see in a moment, was the great missionary to Ireland. We can, though, in a sense, say that the

Irish returned the favor and many missionaries from Ireland worked to convert the rest of the British Isles. After the Romans departed from Britain, little progress was made in spreading the Christian faith until the Irish missionaries arrived beginning in the late 5th century. At the end of the sixth century they were joined by missionaries from Rome. One day in the market in Rome, St. Gregory the Great noticed some blond boys singing and asked if they were angels. “Not angels, but Angles” came the reply. Gregory remembered that incident and after becoming pope sent forty of his monks from his own monastery of St. Andrew’s, including one we now know as St. Augustine of Canterbury, as missionaries to the English people in 597. The King of Kent gave land to the monks and Augustine established a church and monastery in Canterbury. Augustine baptized the king there in 601 and continued to evangelize throughout the south. By this time the Irish missionaries had largely converted the north and midlands.



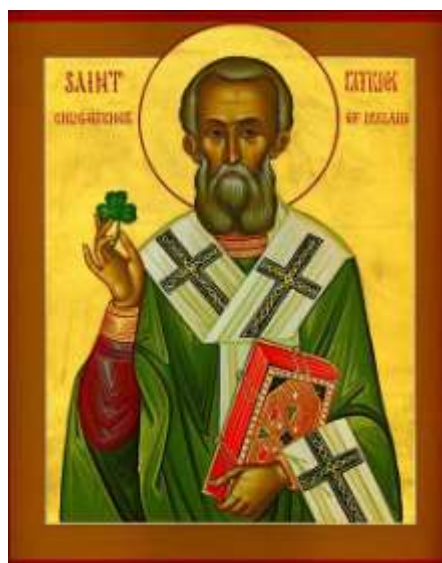
The last area to remain predominately pagan was Sussex, which was converted by the efforts of St. Wilfrid in 681. There were a number of differences in practice between the Romans and the Irish (ranging from how the date of Pascha would be determined to how the monks would cut their hair), so a Synod was convened in Whitby Abbey in 664, where St. Hilda was Abbess. The synod decided in favor of the Roman practices and from this time forward, the Church in England became more Roman and less Celtic.



St. Cuthbert was born in Northumbria, in what is now Scotland, in about 634. As a boy he had a vision of the soul of St. Aidan carried by the angels, ascending into heaven, after which he went to a nearby monastery to live. He left the monastery to live as a soldier for a few years, perhaps due to family pressure, but he soon returned to monastic life. In 664 Cuthbert became prior of the monastery and became widely known and respected for ministering to the spiritual needs of the people, carrying out missionary journeys, preaching, and performing miracles. His gifts of healing and insight led people to call him the ‘wonder-worker of Britain.’ He went to the Farne Islands to live as a hermit, but the people continued to seek out his counsel and gift of healing. He was elected bishop of Lindisfarne, but was reluctant to take on this work until a large crowd, including the king came to insist upon his consecration. He died on the 20th of March, in 687. When his burial casket was opened eleven years later, his body was found to be incorrupt and many miracles were attributed to his relics. Fleeing Danish invaders, the monks took Cuthbert’s remains with them, to one location, then another, till in a vision, Cuthbert announced his desire to be buried at Durham. His relics were still incorrupt when the Protestants went to destroy the tombs at the time of the Reformation.



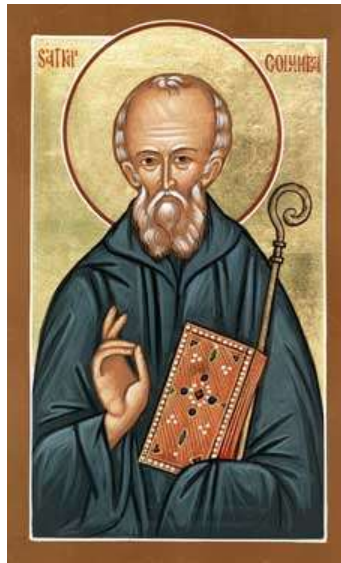
St. Bede the Venerable was born around 673 in the north of England and at the age of seven went to live in a Northumbrian monastery at Jarrow, near what is now called New Castle. Following a devastating plague, only the Abbot, St. Coelfrith, and Bede, now fourteen survived, but they continued to sing the Office everyday in the chapel. Bede was ordained as a priest to serve the monastic community, but he is chiefly remembered as a writer and scholar, completing over sixty works. Bede wrote *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, earning him the title of “Father of English History.” He died in 735 and his relics were translated to Durham Cathedral in the 11th century. After his grave was looted during the Reformation, his relics were re-interred in the chapel at Durham with those of St. Cuthbert, and they may be venerated there to this day. We keep his feast on the 27th of May. Again it is difficult to move on without mentioning such saints as Dunstan, Chad, David of Wales, Ninian, and Frideswide, but our space is limited and this is only meant to be an introduction.



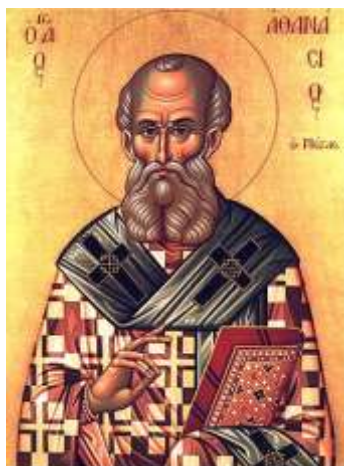
We need to examine Ireland on its own, for it is a special place of many saints and scholars. Before the time of St. Patrick there had been efforts to evangelize in Ireland but they had not met with much success. St. Paladius, the deacon of St. Germanus in Gaul, was consecrated as bishop and sent as a missionary to Ireland; he died around 431. St. Patrick, as a boy, was taken as a slave to Ireland from Britain. His family was Christian. His father was a deacon and his grandfather, a priest. While in Ireland, he worked as a slave, tending the sheep for six years before he was able to escape and make his way home. Then, after a few years, Patrick wrote of a vision saying, "I saw a man coming, as it were from Ireland. His name was Victoricus, and he carried many letters, and he gave me one of them. I read the heading: "The Voice of the Irish". As I began the letter, I imagined in that moment that I heard the voice of those very people who were near the wood of Foclut, which is beside the western sea—and they cried out, as with one voice: "We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come and walk among us." He went to Gaul where he received further education and was ordained as priest and bishop. He returned to Ireland, where he worked in the north and west of the island. In his most famous confrontation with the established order of kings and druids who ruled the land, the High King and the druids were gathered at the Hill of Tara for a feast in the spring of 433. Patrick was about ten miles away on the Hill of Slane. The custom at that Celtic feast was that all fires had to be extinguished. Patrick and his companions, however, were celebrating Pascha. In the Western Rite we light a bonfire at Pascha, symbolic of the light of Christ, which banishes all darkness. When the king and druids saw Patrick's fire burning on Slane, the druids, knowing what it represented, prophesied saying, "if that fire is not extinguished tonight it will never be put out." They rode to Slane but were held back by some unseen force and were unable to put the fire out. One of the party, Erc, became a convert and was ordained by Patrick to be the first Bishop of Slane; he was also the teacher of St. Brendan the Navigator (who may have journeyed as far as North America with his monks). Patrick faced great opposition, but building on the wisdom found in the old, pagan traditions, taught the truth of the Christian faith and soon the whole island was Christian. St. Patrick died on March 17th in 461. In a prayer for protection, now sung as a well beloved hymn, St. Patrick wrote, "I bind unto myself today, the strong virtue of the invocation of the Trinity: I believe in the Trinity in Unity, the Creator of the universe."



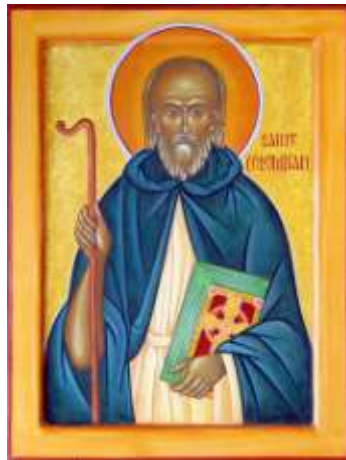
In addition to St. Patrick, Ireland has two other patron saints, Brigid of Kildare and Colmcille. Her father who was a pagan chieftain gave St. Brigid the name of a pagan goddess. Brigid's mother, however, was a Christian, who had been baptized by St. Patrick. Brigid became a nun and was made abbess of a dual monastery of men and women by St. Mel, though Mel made a mistake and read the prayer for the consecration of a bishop over her (making St. Mel the patron of absent minded clergy) Some modern feminists claim that Brigit was the 'first female bishop,' but she functioned only as an abbess and gave spiritual oversight of her monasteries to St. Conleth, Bishop of Kildare. She established a school in Kildare that became famous all over Europe, even by the time of her death. A story is told that Brigit went to minister to a pagan chieftain who was dying. He was delirious when she arrived, so she sat by his bedside and began to weave a cross with the rushes that lined the floor. The man became calmer and asked what she was doing, giving her the opportunity to explain the meaning of the Cross of Christ. He questioned her with growing interest, till he asked to be baptized shortly before his death. These crosses are still woven on her feast day and hung in houses as a protection from evil. St. Brigid died in 525 and her feast day is February 1st.



The other patron saint of Ireland is St. Columba, also known as St. Colmcille (meaning ‘dove of the church’). Born in 521 to a family of kings, Colmcille was educated at the great monastic school of Clonard. Colmcille was one of twelve students of St. Finian who became known as the ‘twelve apostles of Ireland.’ He was ordained as a priest and founded several monasteries, including the monastery at Kells where the Book of Kells was later written. He became involved in what is often called the first copyright dispute in history when he prepared a copy of a famous Psalter. The dispute eventually led to a battle in which several men were killed. A synod was called and ruled against Colmcille, allowing him to go into exile as his punishment for what had happened. He went with his companions to Scotland and worked his way to Iona, which became the base for evangelizing the Picts. There he established a school and wrote and translated many books. He was known as a diplomat, a wonder-worker and founded many churches. He died on Iona in 597 and was buried there. Later his relics, along with those of St. Brigit, were translated to Downpatrick in North Ireland, to be buried alongside St. Patrick. Colmcille’s feast day is June 9th.



The history of the Christianization of Germany is somewhat more complex. The Roman Empire included what is now the western part of Germany with major cities in Cologne and Trier. As with other areas, many Germanic people in areas controlled by the Romans became Christian. Following the Council of Nicaea, St. Athanasius of Alexandria was accused of mistreating Arians and others he disagreed with. Constantine, without trial, exiled Athanasius to Trier. There Athanasius was received with honors by St. Maximin, the bishop of Trier. Maximin, like Athanasius, was a strong opponent of Arianism. Born near Poitiers in Gaul, he was educated and ordained to the priesthood by St. Agritius, the previous bishop of Trier. At this time Trier was the governmental seat of the Western Emperor, making the bishop of Trier very influential by proximity to the throne. When four Arian bishops came to Trier to seek the favor of the emperor, Maximinus refused to receive them and convinced the emperor to reject their proposals. He died around 346 and his feast day is May 29th.



Roman rule began to crumble in the 5th century and some areas reverted to paganism. Arian Christians converted the eastern German tribes, but the Franks under Clovis, who next conquered the western tribes, adhered to the Nicene faith. Slowly thereafter, English, Irish and Scottish missionaries re-Christianized Germany. St. Columbanus was born in County Meath in Ireland, in the same year that St. Benedict died. He was apparently very good looking and as a young man had many women chasing after him, providing many temptations to overcome. He left home for monastic life, over the strong objections of his mother. After some years as a monk, he felt a calling to preach the gospel in foreign lands. Along with twelve companions he set sail for England. They worked their way to France where they established monasteries and lived for twenty years. He fell out of favor with the Frankish bishops over the question of how the date of Pascha should be determined and out of favor with the royal family having denounced immorality within the family. Compelled to leave, he made his way to Mainz and then worked his way along

the Rhine and its tributaries. One of his companions, St. Gall, spoke the local language and they were able to preach the gospel, converted many pagans, and established churches. Going on to Milan, Columbanus preached against the Arians with success. He communicated with St. Gregory and was granted land at Bobbio to establish a monastery where he lived until his death in 615. Writing to St. Gregory, Columbanus declared, “We Irish, though dwelling at the far ends of the earth, are all disciples of St. Peter and St. Paul... Neither heretic, nor Jew, nor schismatic has ever been among us; but the Catholic Faith, Just as it was first delivered to us by yourselves, the successors of the Apostles, is held by us unchanged...” We keep his feast on November 21st.



The next major missionary to the Germanic peoples was born in the English kingdom of Wessex around 672. He was given the name of Winfrid. He devoted himself to monastic life at an early age, eventually teaching in the monastery school and being ordained as a priest. He set out on his first missionary journey in 716, going to the Frisians. A war impeded his efforts and he returned home. After two years he went to Rome, where the Pope commissioned him to return to the Germanic peoples, presenting him with relics of the saints and letters of introduction to take with him. This time he was well received and he was able to baptize thousands and reunite the Christians he found to communion with Rome. Returning to the Pope, the Pope changed his name from Winfrid to Boniface and sent him back to continue his work. Encountering a group of pagans and discovering a great oak tree dedicated to their god, Boniface suggested that their god should strike him down if he cut down their tree. Boniface took up an ax and as he chopped at the tree a great wind pushed the tree over. The pagans accepted this as a sign that Boniface's God was greater and accepted the Christian faith. In 732 the Pope made Boniface the Archbishop of all the German lands and when Boniface next visited Rome in 738 he was received by the people as a living saint. Returning to Germany again Boniface continued to

preach the faith, founding churches and monasteries. He had never realized his hope of converting the Frisians, that first group he had preached to. At the age of seventy-five he went with a group of companions and preached to the Frisians again, baptizing many. At one point however, instead of meeting the converts he expected, his group was attacked by pagans who slew the aged bishop and his companions. The pagans expected to find gold and treasure among the bishop's belongings but were surprised to discover only books. St. Boniface became a martyr for his faith in 754 and we keep his feast on June 5th.



Saint Boniface had brought many monks and nuns with him from England to assist in his work. One of the nuns was a cousin of his, named Lioba. She arrived in Germany in 748 after writing to Boniface, reminding him of their family connection. Boniface named her as the abbot of the convent at Bischofshein, and in time placed her over all the nuns in his care. When Boniface left for Frisia where he would be killed, he left his monastic cowl with Lioba as a sign that she was in charge during his absence. Lioba was a very well educated woman and continued to found new monastic communities after Boniface's death. Bishops and secular rulers alike consulted her for advice; she was the only woman permitted to enter the male monasteries in the area and they continually sought her counsel. She died on September 28th, 782 and was buried near St. Boniface.

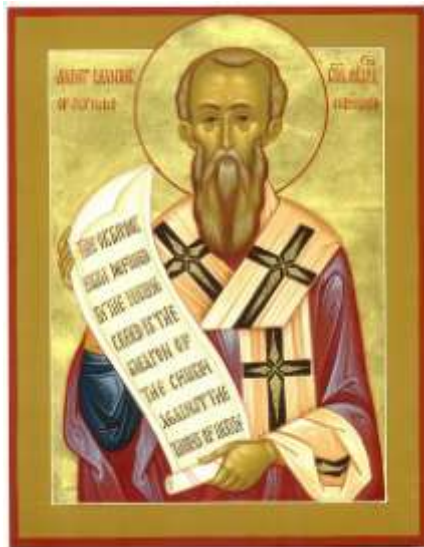


The final area we will look at in this presentation is Spain. Once again Christianity came to Spain largely via the Romans. There are two possible earlier apostolic connections to mention, however. St. James the Great, the brother of John and the son of Zebedee, is said to have come to Spain to preach near the town that now bears his name: *Santiago de Compostela*. Alternately, some sources say that after James was killed in Jerusalem that his body was taken to Spain for burial. In either case, St. James has long been associated with Spain. According to Romans 15:24, St. Paul had planned to visit Spain to preach the gospel there. There is no further reference apart from local legends, however, to know if he was able to fulfill this wish.



There were many martyrs in Spain during each of the periods of persecution within the early church. The Visigoths who had sacked Rome in 410 turned their attention to the peninsula, and there became Arian Christians. St. Hermengild was a Visigothic prince who was converted to the Nicene faith by his wife, a Frankish princess and the Archbishop. St.

Gregory, in his Dialogues, wrote that the Arians captured Hermengild and promised forgiveness if he would receive communion from an Arian bishop. When he refused to return to the Arian fold he was beheaded on Pascha in 586; his feast day is April 13th.



The two principal saints of the sixth and seventh centuries time in Spain were brothers, St. Leander and St. Isidore. St. Leander, the elder brother entered the monastic life early. In time he was sent to Constantinople, and while there met St. Gregory the Great. Leander sought the aid of the Emperor in combating Arians and aid was indeed sent. After his return to Spain Leander was appointed Archbishop of Seville. He revised the Spanish liturgy and converted many, including St. Hermengild, to the Nicene faith. He presided over the Council of Toledo in 589 from which we have the first known reference to the *filioque*. By saying that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, the fathers of this council sought only to show the divinity of Christ; they were not seeking to alter the Nicene understanding of the Trinity. Sadly, by the 8th century, this attempt at a well-meant diplomatic reply to the Arians was taken on as a matter of faith by some of the Germanic tribes, and from that point the controversy over the filioque developed to be a major point of division within the Church. St. Leander is revered as a saint of the Orthodox Church, East and West, and highly respected for his writings. He died about the year 600 and we keep his feast on February 27th. In the Eastern calendar he is remembered, together with St. Hermengild on November 1st.



St. Isidore, St. Leander’s younger brother, was largely educated by his older brother and succeeded him as Archbishop of Seville in 600. He continued the fight against Arianism. He was a prolific writer, completing a twenty-volume encyclopedia and he founded many schools, monasteries and churches. He is often called “the last scholar of the ancient world” and the last of the Fathers in the West. Under his thirty years of leadership as Archbishop of Seville, the heresy of Arianism was finally eradicated from the Spanish Church. He died in 636 and his feast day is April 4th. A sister and a younger brother were also saints of the church.



We haven’t mentioned Northern Africa, which was part of the Western Church, with such saints as Augustine and Cyprian, or the Church in Scandinavia with such saints as Olaf and Ansgar. There are so many others in each of the countries we have examined, and as we hear on the eve of All Saints Day, in a reading from Ecclesiasticus, “there are

some who have left no memorial,” but they were merciful and righteous - and holy. The Orthodox Church rejoices in her saints, those holy men and women who have shown with the light of Christ and witnessed to truth and love and all good things. They have each worshiped in the language of their culture and thereby learned to know and love God - and this, I would submit - is ultimately what makes the Western Rite or the Eastern Rite - Orthodox.