

Grapevine Prayer Diary Integrated Notes for July

[Year of death given in parentheses. *BCP* = *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England.]

Two features which may strike us, where many saints (and worthies) of July are concerned, are family and travel. Celebrating the Visitation on the 2nd, we recall Our Lord having travelled in His Mother's womb to be greeted by one cousin, St. John, in the womb of another, St. Elizabeth; and His grandmother, St. Anne, is commemorated on the 26th (in some calendars, together with St. Joachim).

1 (in the East, 3 Aug.): Simeon (c. 590), after years as a hermit monk near the Dead Sea, returned to Homs, in Syria, and, in the words of Attwater, 'devoted himself to caring for the most wretched and neglected' and that in a way that the people he served would not acknowledge him, to the extent he was nicknamed 'the crazy', and, according to the bishop who wrote his Life, 'he cried out against many because of the Holy Spirit [...] so that through his inventiveness he nearly put an end to sinning in the whole city.'

4: For his Feast on 11 November, we note St. Martin was "seized upon and made Bishop of Tours by acclamation". The *BCP* also observes the later translation of his relics on the anniversary of this day of his consecration as Bishop, which was also the date of the dedication of his church in Tours. By the time it first did so, in 1561, St. Martin's relics had survived various destructions of the variously rebuilt church housing them over the preceding thousand years and more. A more thorough one than any of these took place two years later, at the hands of Huguenots. Henry IV, however, thinking the 'crown worth a Mass', resumed the royal custom of becoming a lay canon of his church (1598), and it entered on a new period of splendour. But an even more thorough destruction was to follow in the revolutionary Terror of 1793, after which streets were laid on much of the site to prevent rebuilding. Nonetheless, in 1860, excavations discovered the location of St. Martin's tomb, and between 1886 and 1924 a new church was built above it and dedicated on this day.

6 (also 30 July): Godelieve (also 'Godelina': 1070) was a young woman whose charitable giving, Rudge says, 'often involved her in difficulties with her father's steward and even with her pious father', and who wanted to be a nun. Bertulf of Gistel, however, with the help of her father's overlord, Count Eustace of Boulogne (companion of William the Conqueror and father of Godfrey and Baldwin, successive rulers of Jerusalem), persuaded her to marry him. Bizarrely, as Attwater writes, 'he deserted her almost at once, leaving her to be outrageously treated by her mother-in-law.' She escaped home, and her father, with the help of the Bishop of Tournai and the Count of Flanders, seemed to persuade Bertulf to treat her properly. But he had two servants murder her 'by a combination of strangling and drowning, while trying to give an appearance of natural death.' Attwater continues, 'Bertulf was never convicted of the crime, but local indignation and reports of miracles at her intercession' led to her veneration as a martyr. In Rudge's words, Bertulf, later 'truly converted', 'expiated his sins by a life of severe penance' in a monastery, and sponsored the founding of an abbey dedicated to her at the place of the murder.

7: Willibald, who, as a monk helped revitalize Monte Cassino – the monastery of St. Benedict (whose 'translation' is commemorated on 11 July) was also a kinsman of St. Boniface, who called for him to help in the German mission field, where he was joined by his brother, St. Winnibald, and sister, St. Walburga. Boniface ordained him priest (on 22 July) and bishop, with his immediate field, Eichstätt, later becoming his diocese (for about 45 years). Their father is venerated in Lucca as 'St. Richard, King of the English', having died there while he and his sons were on pilgrimage. Willibald went on as a pilgrim to Rome, Sicily, Cyprus, Anatolia, Syria, Constantinople, and – as the first known

Englishman there – the Holy Land, becoming one of the most travelled Englishman of his time. Later, at the double monastery he and his brother founded at Heidenheim, he dictated the *Hodoeporicon*, an account of his travels, to the nun, Hugeburc: the first travel-book by an Anglo-Saxon. (A modern English translation of the *Hodoeporicon* can easily be found online.)

Also one of the days on which the brothers Cyril and Methodius, ‘Apostles of the Slavs’ on behalf of both Constantinople and Rome, and regarded as the founders of Slavonic literature, are commemorated.

Also, Prosper of Aquitaine (after 455), lay theologian and historian, who notes that Palladius (c. 457) as deacon convinced Pope Celestine I (432: 27 July) to send Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre (448: 31 July), to Britain in 429 to refute Pelagian leaders. And St. Prosper further notes that St. Celestine consecrated St. Palladius Bishop to go to the “Scots [Gaelic speakers in Ireland and Scotland] believing in Christ to be their first Bishop” in 431 – before St. Patrick (c. 461: 17 Mar.) . St. Prosper began corresponding with St. Augustine c. 428/9 and went on upholding his teachings on grace, for example, in what Attwater calls his ‘treatise on God’s universal saving will’, ‘The Call of All Nations’. He left Marseilles to work in the Papal chancery in Rome under Leo the Great (461: 11 Apr.).

11: Olga (969), wife of the pagan Scandinavian ruler of Kiev, Prince Igor, became Regent upon his murder, fiercely avenging his death on the tribe who killed him. Later, visiting the Emperor Constantine VII in Constantinople, she converted to Christianity. She had no success evangelizing her son, Prince Sviatoslav, but he did permit public preaching and she seems to have had more success in society – and certainly with her grandson, St. Vladimir (1015: 15 July), who, after a fierce early, pagan part of his reign, in 988 converted to Christianity and married Anna, the sister of the Emperor Basil II. He built churches and schools and strongly encouraged the evangelization of his people. For their service to the conversion of Russia, they are called ‘Isapóstolos’, ‘Equal to the Apostles’.

13 (30 July in the East, among other days): Silas was one of the two “chief men among the brethren”, “being prophets also themselves”, in Jerusalem (the other was Judas Barsabbas), sent with Sts. Paul and Barnabas to report in Antioch what was decided at the council, and he remained there with them, going on with St. Paul when he and St. Barnabas parted ways (Acts 15). They were joined by St. Timothy. They crossed over into Macedonia, where Sts. Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned – and wonderfully freed again – in Philippi (ch. 16). They stayed in Berea when St. Paul went on to Athens, to all meet up again in Corinth (chs. 17-18). In the West, the Silvanus of 2 Corinthians 1:19, the first verse of both 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and usually of 1 Peter 5:12, is taken to be the same person; in the East, St. Silvanus is seen as a distinct person – after whom St. Silouan of Mt. Athos (1938: 24 Sept.) was named when he became a monk there.

Also, St. Ezra (Greek & Latin ‘Esdras’), the scribe and priest connected with the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian Exile (recorded in Ezra-Nehemiah), to whom later Books were also attributed.

15: Swithun (or Swithin: 2 July 862) was, as priest, chaplain and counsellor to Egbert, King of the West Saxons. Under the patronage of his son, Ethelwulf, whose education had probably been entrusted to him, St. Swithun became Bishop of the royal capital, Winchester (852), and a great church-builder. On this date in 971, his body was translated from the humble grave he had requested outside the cathedral, to a shrine within the newly-enlarged church. Under Henry VIII, his shrine was destroyed – the fate of most of his relics is uncertain (though some survived elsewhere). A weather superstition is

associated with his day (perhaps dating to a heavy rainfall at his translation): that whatever its weather, will continue for 40 days.

Also, Donald (also 'Domhnall', 'Donivald': 8th c.), who was a married layman in Ogilvy, near Glamis, in what is now Angus, Scotland. His wife and he had nine daughters. When his wife died, he and his daughters made a hermitage of their home, farming by hand to supply their simple needs. When he died, they continued their life together at the convent founded at Abernethy by St. Dairlugdach (1 Feb.), second abbess of Kildare, and dedicated to its first abbess, St Brigid (c. 525: 1 Feb.). J.C. Guthrie says their shrine there was a popular pilgrimage site until the Reformation, and Dr. Farmer notes the collective description of 'the Nine Maidens' was 'often applied also to natural features in the area such as hills and wells.'

17: Sts. Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Veturius, Felix, Aquilinus, Laetantius, Januaria, Generosa, Vestia, Donata and Secunda (c. 180), seven men and five women, equally steadfast and outspoken, are the first whose authentic 'Acts' survive in Latin, the language of their Province, Africa. When asked by the Proconsul to 'return to a sound mind' and 'cease to be of this persuasion', St. Speratus, who had pointed out 'We have never done ill, we have not lent ourselves to wrong, we have never spoken ill, but when ill-treated we have given thanks', replied, 'It is an ill persuasion to do murder, to speak false witness.' Offered a month to reconsider, he replied, 'I am a Christian.' And with him they all agreed. Whereupon they were judicially murdered. The recorder of their 'Acts' adds, 'And so they all together were crowned with martyrdom; and they reign with the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever. Amen.'

Also, St. Nerses (a name sometimes spelled 'Narses') of Lambron (1198), who became Archbishop of Tarsus. He translated Greek, Latin, Syriac, and probably Coptic works, and is one of the greatest Armenian poets and writers. He worked for union with the Greek Church (unsuccessfully) and the Latin Church (with partial success). Of him, nephew, Attwater writes, "'To me," Narses declared to critics of his endeavours, "Armenians, Latins, Greeks, Egyptians, Syrians are all one. My conscience is clear.'" (See also his uncle, Nerses IV 'Shnorhali' ('filled with Grace': 1173), 13 Aug.).

18: Elizabeth (1918), Prince Philip's great aunt, was the daughter of Ludwig IV of Hesse and Princess Alice (Victoria and Albert's second daughter). In 1884 she married Grand Duke Sergei, younger brother of Czar Alexander III: at their wedding, the Czarevitch Nicholas met his future wife, her younger sister, Alexandra. When her husband was assassinated by a Socialist bomber in 1905, she visited the murderer in prison, forgiving him and begging him to repent, leaving her Bible with him. She became a nun, founding a convent with hospital, pharmacy, and orphanage, aspiring to combine intercession with visiting and personally caring for those in need. She was 'arrested' on Lenin's orders, and with seven others, first beaten, then thrown down a mine, followed by hand grenades and burning brushwood: it was a while before their hymn-singing stopped.

19: Macrina the Younger (379), granddaughter of St. Macrina and daughter of Sts. Basil the Elder and Emmelia (whom she succeeded as head of a religious community in Pontus), older sister of the bishops and scholars Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Peter of Sebastea, whom she helped raise. (See further her brother Gregory's Life of her – for example the Dutch translation in the Chaplaincy library, while English translations can easily be found online.)

20: Elijah (one of the many Old Testament saints in various Church calendars) eluded apostate tyranny by living by the brook Cherith, in Zaraphath, on Mt. Horeb, and elsewhere, and was taken up into

heaven, later to appear with Moses to Our Lord and Sts. Peter, James, and John on the mountain of the Transfiguration (traditionally Mt. Tabor). The Carmelites especially look to him as a forbear in their life of prayer in seclusion.

Also the Feast of St. Margaret, Virgin and Martyr (17 July in the East, as Marina), daughter of a pagan priest who secretly learned the Faith from a Christian woman. Many are her name-children, including several saints, and St. Joan of Arc said she appeared to and guided her over a good 7 years, but Pope Gelasius had declared her Legend apocryphal in 494 and one modern writer, Donald Attwater, says, 'there is no positive evidence that she ever existed.' Here, we come to another 'theme' of July, the distinction between history as it happened and as it is written about: a reason to favour circumspection over credulity or incredulity. St. Margaret is one of the three of the Fourteen Holy Helpers with a July Feast. The other two are martyrs, about whom little is certainly known, though much came to be written: St. Christopher and St. Panteleon.

22: Mary Magdalen has, in the West, often, but not universally, been associated with the woman in St. Luke 7:36-50 and with Mary of Bethany, sister of Sts. Martha (Feast 29 July) and Lazarus, and, outside the New Testament, has had various travels attributed to her: some take her to Ephesus with St. John and the Virgin Mary (and some take St. Lazarus to Cyprus), others, Sts. Mary Magdalen, Martha, Lazarus, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary the mother of James to Marseilles and Provence.

25: James, the brother of St. John, and first of the Apostles to be martyred (Acts 12). Later traditions variously report both that he journeyed to Spain to preach the Gospel and returned to Jerusalem, and that his body was brought to Spain after his martyrdom: it is to visit this shrine that the great pilgrimage route to Santiago ('St. James' in Spanish) de Compostela leads.

Also, Christopher (9 May in the East), whose name means 'Christ-bearer', had a church dedicated to him in Bythnia in 452 and is a martyred Roman soldier in the earliest accounts. In the West he came to be seen as gigantic, in the East as a member of a race of 'Dog-headed' people (Cynocephali), with these characteristics sometimes combining. In legend, seeking to serve 'the greatest' and having heard of Christ, he helped bear people across a ford, until he was nearly borne down by a child, Who revealed Himself to be Christ, Creator and Bearer of the world. So he became a patron of travellers, of whom it was written 'he bore Him on his shoulder by conveying and leading, in his body by making it lean, in mind by devotion, and in mouth by confession and preaching.'

27: Celestine I (see 7 July) also corresponded with St. Augustine, and not only opposed the Pelagians, but the Manichaeans (such as St. Augustine had once been, himself), the Donatists, and Novatians. And then, in 428, Nestorius became Patriarch of Constantinople and started teaching his novel and defective interpretation of the Incarnation. Pope St. Celestine excommunicated him and deposed him unless he retracted. He refused and the Third Ecumenical Council was summoned to meet at Ephesus in 431. Some 200 Bishops from around the known world, including two sent by St. Celestine to represent him, all agreed in condemning Nestorius, and the Emperor confirmed it.

Also, Panteleon (or Panteleimon), whose name means 'all-compassionate' (compare 'Kyrie eleison': 'Lord, have mercy'), who was commemorated early in East and West. The Emperor St. Justinian (in the East, 14 Nov.: 565) rebuilt his church at Nicomedia in Bythnia (now Izmit, Turkey). According to his legend, he reverted to his father's paganism while studying medicine after the death of his Christian mother, until convinced by St. Hermolaus (also commemorated as a martyr on this date)

that 'the science of salvation' complements the science of medicine, after which he was instrumental in converting his father.

30: On the day after his death, the Diocese in Europe remembers William Wilberforce, together with both his colleague of 45 years in striving to abolish slavery, Samuel Clarkson, and the author of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (ed. 1, 1789), an autobiography of his life as a slave, his conversion to Christianity, and his later life after he bought his freedom – one of the first known widely successful books by an African in English, which they later worked together to bring out in Dutch (1790) and German (1792) translations as well. (Equiano's autobiography can be easily found online (also as free volunteer-read audiobook at LibriVox.org).)

31: Germanus (see 7 July) had been a married lawyer, and had been made Governor of Armorica (now, Brittany), when he was elected Bishop 'much against his will' (in the words of Attwater). When in Britain, he visited the grave of St. Alban (17 & 22 June). He also led the Britons to a bloodless victory against Pictish and Saxon raiders by shouting 'Alleluia' three times in a valley where the echoes gave the impression of a huge army. Years later, he returned to confront a Pelagian revival: with such success that, according to the Venerable Bede, "the Faith was maintained uncorrupted in these parts for a long time." He died in Ravenna, where he had gone to plead the Armoricans' case against the viceroy in Gaul, with the Emperor. His body was returned to Auxerre, where his grave became a centre for pilgrims.

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