

Grapevine Prayer Diary Integrated Notes March

More or less of the month of March always falls within the season of Lent, when we prepare for Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter, and it is good to note what St. John of Damascus (c. 749: 4 Dec.; 27 Mar. in the old Roman calendar) wrote in *The Orthodox Faith* (a summary of the teaching of the Greek Fathers which became influential in Latin translation as well): 'Although Christ died as man, and His holy soul was separated from His spotless body, nevertheless His Godhead remained unseparated from both—from the soul and from the body' (III.27). Though we continue thus 'separated' by death while time runs, the Church recognizes that whatever retain integrity of bodies are still us, as can be seen from the contemporary account of the martyrdom of St. Polycarp (c.155: 23 Feb., also 26 Jan.): 'we afterwards took up his bones, as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold'. This month, we will see fruits of this – and more questionable consequences.

1: David (Welsh: Dewi), sixth-century bishop and abbot of Menevia (later, St. David's), regarded as the patron of Wales since the twelfth century.

Also, Swithbert (719), companion of St. Willibrord, who preached successfully in Brabant, Gelderland, and Cleves, returning to England to be consecrated bishop by St. Wilfrid (12 Oct.) to set off again as apostle to southern Westphalia, until forced to withdraw by heathen Saxon conquerors.

2: Chad (672), a disciple of St. Aidan (31 Aug.), was chosen by King Oswy to be Bishop of York, while St. Wilfrid, also chosen for that see, was away seeking consecration: St. Wilfrid deferred to St. Chad, but Archbishop St. Theodore (19 Sept.) restored St. Wilfrid, deposing St. Chad – whom he soon consecrated first bishop of Mercia, where he laid the foundations of the see of Lichfield.

3: Winwaloe (Sixth c.: translation Feast, 28 Apr.), a Breton, was trained by St. Budoc (also Buoc, Beuzec, Budeaux) on an island called 'Laurea'. His name takes an astonishing variety of forms – Webster says, 'some fifty' – including: Breton 'Gwenole', French 'Guénolé', 'Guingalois', 'Ouignoualey', and 'Valois', and others from 'Winwallus', 'Winwalloc', and 'Winnol' to 'Onolaus'. He became a hermit on another island, Tibidy (in the roadstead of Brest), practicing, in the words of Dr. Farmer, 'the usual Celtic mortifications of reciting the psalter daily with arms outstretched and wearing clothes of goat-hair.' Later, he founded the monastery called Landévennec after him ('Lan' [church] of Bennoc: another form of his name), on a rocky headland across from Tibidy. It was attacked by Vikings in 914, but his relics were evacuated, some remaining where they were taken, such as Château-du-Loir, Montreuil-sur-Mer (in the church of St. Walow), and 'Mont Blandin' (St. Peter's Abbey), in Ghent. His cult became widespread in Britain, for which Farmer notes 'two reasons: foundations in Cornwall from his monastery, and the diffusion of his relics.' On the Lizard peninsula in Cornwall, Landewednack adapts the mother abbey's name, and Gunwalloe presents another variant of his. Farmer thinks the exile of St. Dunstan (988: 19 May) at Mont Blandin and later gifts of relics from there to Leofric, Bishop of Exeter, are probably responsible for the relics claimed by Abingdon, Waltham, and Glastonbury, as well as Exeter, and the presence of his name in English calendars and litanies of that period. Winnold House, near Wereham in Norfolk, incorporates what is left of St. Winwaloe's Priory, there, while Farmer notes the celebration of his feast in Norwich where a street was named after his church in it, and 'his name occurs in a local weather jingle about the saints of the first three days of March: "First comes David, then comes Chad, / Then comes Winnol, roaring like mad."'

6: Baldred (also 'Balther(us)') and Billfrith (Eighth c.) were both hermits in Northumbria, the former living on Bass Rock (which later came to feature in several 19th- and 20th-c. novels) in the Firth of

Forth, the latter (whose name is thought to mean ‘peace [frith] of the two-edge sword [bill]’), a goldsmith who, a colophon added to the Lindisfarne Gospels says, ‘forged the ornaments which are on it on the outside and adorned it with gold and gems and with gilded-on silver-pure metal’ – but whose ‘treasure binding’ sadly does not survive. They come to be celebrated together because an Eleventh-century priest, Alfred Westow, claimed to discover the relics of each – and carried them off to Durham, as he also did with those of Sts. Acca (740: 20 Oct.) and Boisil (c. 661: 7 July), and of the Venerable Bede (735: 25/26/27 May), and, reputedly, still others as well.

7: Perpetua and Felicity (203), mistress and slave, martyred together with Felicity’s husband, Revocatus, and others in Carthage, the detailed contemporary account of whose martyrdom survives. When St. Felicity suffered in giving birth in prison, a guard asked, “What will you do when you are tossed to the beasts?” She replied, “Now I suffer what I suffer; then Another will be in me Who will suffer for me, as I shall suffer for Him.”

8: Felix of Dunwich (647), a Burgundian ordained in Gaul, came offering his services to St. Honorius (653: 30 Sept.) – one of the reinforcement of missionary monks sent to Britain by St. Gregory the Great, who had become fifth Archbishop of Canterbury. St. Felix was sent as Bishop to Dunwich, capital of the East Angles, to help King Sigebert (who had become a Christian while in exile in Gaul) to build up the Church among his people. Sigebert wanted St. Felix to help him build up a school such as were found in Gaul and at Canterbury, which he did, labouring for 17 years (as the Venerable Bede says with serious wordplay) ‘according to the mystery and meaning of his name to bring that province to the gifts of everlasting happiness [‘felicitas’]’. King Sigebert and St. Felix both also welcomed the missionary work of the Irish St. Fursa (or ‘Fursey’, 650: 16 Jan.) and his brethren, who established a monastery at the old Roman fort at what is now Burgh Castle, Suffolk. St. Felix also founded an abbey in Soham, where he was buried, but his body was later translated to Ramsey. Felixstowe takes its name from him, its patron.

Also, John ‘of God’ (1550) who gave up all practice of religion while fighting for Spain against the French and Turks (1522). After a decade as a shepherd, he repented, and headed for North Africa to help Christian slaves there, expecting martyrdom. Dissuaded from this in Gibraltar, he became a seller of Christian books and pictures. During a period of madness, he was calmed by St. John of Avila (1569: 10 May), who persuaded him to devote himself to the care of the sick, poor, and outcast. Working as a wood-merchant to fund a hospital and chapel in Granada, he died after ten years service there from an illness resulting from saving a drowning man: his helpers became an Order of hospitallers (for a group of whom Haydn later wrote a lovely little mass setting).

9: Gregory (c. 395) turned from teaching rhetoric to service as priest, and later, Bishop of Nyssa, consecrated by his older brother, St. Basil (379), who complained when, at first, he was ‘too easy-going, unwary, and lacking in tact’ : later, he joined, then succeeded him, as defender of orthodoxy against the politically successful Arians, and as teacher about ever “straining forward to what lies ahead” in knowing and loving God (Philippians 3:13).

10: The Forty Martyrs of Sebastea (320), soldiers of Legio XII Fulminata who refused the Emperor Licinius’s order to apostatize – driven naked onto a frozen lake all night, one joined at the last as another gave way.

11: Eulogius of Cordoba (859) imprisoned by the invaders, wrote encouraging Sts. Flora and Mary (851: 24 Nov.) – also imprisoned and awaiting being sold as sex slaves if they refused to apostatize – saying, “fear not: no harm can touch your souls whatever infamy is inflicted on your bodies”: they were beheaded when they remained firm. He was released, and recorded the sufferings and deaths of those persecuted over the next seven years. Chosen Archbishop of Toledo, he was arrested before consecration for sheltering the converted girl, St. Leocritia (martyred 15 Mar.); telling the magistrate, “Had you asked me, I would gladly have done as much for you”, he was beheaded for refusing to apostatize.

12: Gregory the Great (604), son of a Roman senator and St. Silvia (c. 593: 3 Nov.), while Prefect (the chief magistrate) of the City of Rome, sold vast estates in Sicily to found six monasteries there, and converted his family mansion on the Celian Hill to another, St. Andrew’s, which he then joined as a simple monk. Pope Benedict I called him forth to become one of the 7 Deacons of the City as Lombard invaders threatened it. (His boyhood had known the first and second Gothic sacks of Rome.) Pope Pelagius II sent him as ambassador (579-85) to the Imperial Court at Constantinople to seek military help, after which he returned to St. Andrew’s until, when Pelagius died of the plague, he became the first monk ever elected Pope, and the first Pope to call himself ‘the servant of the servants of God’. Before being elected Pope, he had hoped to lead a mission to the Anglo-Saxons in Britain: instead, he eventually sent St. Augustine (c. 604: 26 May) and dozens of other monks from St. Andrew’s, actively supporting the mission with reinforcements, with guidance in correspondence with St. Augustine, and by writing to King St. Ethelbert (616: 25 Feb.) of Kent and his Frankish Christian Queen, Bertha. Before that, he negotiated peace with the Langobard royalty, and he also cultivated good relations with those of the Franks in Gaul and the Visigoths in Spain, and, in general, in the words of Dr. Farmer, ‘in the breakdown of imperial authority assumed many of the roles of a civil ruler.’ And, in the words of Attwater, ‘he reformed the administration of the estates of the Roman church and from their income spent large sums on the relief of sufferers from war, pestilence, and famine, and to ransom prisoners’. Dr. Farmer says, ‘he probably took a prominent part in the gradual codification and adaptation’ of church music (whence the term ‘Gregorian chant’), and ‘composed a number of prayers which formed the kernel of the Gregorian Sacramentary’ (for feasts of the Church year and saints). Attwater notes he is also ‘accounted the fourth of the great Latin doctors of the church’ for the numerous and influential writings which survive, including his ‘Pastoral Care’ on the office and duties of a bishop (first translated into English by King Alfred), his sermons on the Gospels and ‘Moralia’ (a practical commentary) on Job, over 800 letters, and his ‘Dialogues’ (which include his life of St. Benedict (c. 550: 21 Mar. & 11 July) among others).

Also, Alphege (951), Bishop of Winchester, who ordained Sts. Dunstan and Ethelwold (later Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Winchester respectively) priests together on the same day.

14: Matilda (968), Queen of Henry the Fowler, mother of St. Bruno, Archbishop of Cologne (965: 11 Oct.), the Emperor Otto I, and Henry ‘the Quarrelsome’, the latter two of whom, Attwater reports, complained of her “liberality to the poor and to the church” during her 32 years of widowhood.

15: Longinus, the name traditionally given to the soldier who pieced Christ’s side on the Cross, converted and died a martyr for refusing to apostatize.

17: Patrick (c. 461), a Briton captured by Irish pirates and reduced to slavery for six years in his youth, he turned to prayer as he had not done in his earlier freedom, and, after returning to his family,

became a priest, then a missionary bishop to Ireland, successfully abolishing pagan worship and encouraging monasticism where he worked.

Also, Joseph of Arimathea (Sts. Luke 23:51, Matthew 27:57-60, and John 19:38-42), later a figure in much legendary history, not least involving Glastonbury Abbey and the Holy Grail.

Also, Withburga (c. 743: translation Feast, 8 July), who was the youngest daughter of King Anna of East Anglia and sister of St. Etheldreda (679: 23 June) – among others about whom you can read elsewhere in these sets of monthly notes, including her niece, St. Ermenhild (c. 700: 13 Feb.). She lived as a solitary (at Holkham, Norfolk), then founded a community at East Dereham, where she died before the buildings were completed. She was buried in the churchyard, but exhumed some 50 years later: her body was incorrupt and was translated to the church, while a spring arose at her first grave (and is still to be seen in the St. Nicholas churchyard). Then, in 974, Brithnoth, first abbot of Ely after it was rebuilt following devastation by the Danes, with the approval of King St. Edgar (975: 8 July) and St. Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester (984: 1 Aug.), had a band of monks accompanied by soldiers go secretly by night to Dereham to fetch her body to Ely upon the contention that St. Withburga would have wanted to be buried with her sisters who were already there – pursued unsuccessfully by the men of Dereham. Farmer writes, ‘The body was reburied at Ely where, however, the incorruption story was never exploited, as it might have detracted from Etheldreda’s glory.’ This seems to have changed to some extent. In the course of the Norman rebuilding, St. Withburga’s body was moved to a new part in 1102, and, in 1106, to near the high altar together with the remains of Sts. Sexburga and Ermengild (of whom only the bones remained), and Etheldreda, whose body was ‘entire’ – but Butler writes that eyewitness accounts formed the basis of the one in the 12th-century *Book of Ely* that St. Withburga’s body ‘was not only sound but also fresh, and the limbs perfectly flexible’. In 1109, Ely was made a cathedral.

18: Edward (979), was supported by St. Dunstan in his disputed succession (at around age 13) to his father, King St. Edgar. His murder led to the succession of his younger brother, Ethelred, who had been supported by an anti-monastic party in Mercia. After his burial “without any kingly honours” according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, miracles soon occurred at his grave and he was acclaimed saint and martyr.

Also, Cyril of Jerusalem (386) whose catechetical discourses survive, and to whose initiative Dom Gregory Dix attributed the “liturgical revolution” which shaped the Church’s year. (He and his church serve as a counter-example to the state of the Church of England in Sabine Baring-Gould’s pseudepigraphal satire, ‘Only a Ghost! by Irenaeus the Deacon’ (1870), available at LibriVox.org)

19: Joseph, of whom all that is certainly known is written in the Gospels (Sts. Matt. 1-2, & 13:55; Luke 1-2, & 4:22; John 6:42, and Mark 6:3), was of the house of David, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and foster-father of Our Lord. His profession, ‘tekton’, mentioned twice, was understood by St. Justin Martyr (165: 14 Apr., & 1 June), for example, to mean a ‘carpenter’, and he says, Jesus ‘was in the habit of working as a carpenter when among men, making ploughs and yokes’ (*Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 88). And it has long been usually so understood. But scholars have pointed out its range of meaning includes an artisan in various materials including wood (even, a ‘shipwright’), stone, or metal. It could be associated with poverty or wealth. And Jewish scholars have pointed out that in somewhat later, Talmudic use, ‘(son of a) carpenter [‘naggar’]’, could be used to designate a very learned and wise man. John McHugh, in *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (1975) interestingly examines the early evidence that ‘Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses’ (St.

Mark 15:40) was his sister and Klopas (St. John 19:25) his brother and father of Simon (St. Matt. 13:55, Mark 6:3), Bishop of Jerusalem after the martyrdom of his cousin, St. James the Just (23 Oct.).

20: Cuthbert (687) from being a monk at Melrose, moved with Abbot St. Eata (686: 26 Oct.) to found Ripon, returning to Melrose as prior, though regularly travelling far and wide to minister and as missionary. After the Synod of Whitby (664), he adopted Roman customs and became prior of Lindisfarne, though eventually withdrawing to live as a hermit. In 686, King Egfrith and Archbishop St. Theodore chose him bishop of Hexham, though he soon exchanged sees with St. Eala, occupying Lindisfarne himself. When Danes destroyed it, in 875, some monks set out with the shrine with his remains and other relics, seeking a safe home for them. In 995, that proved to be Durham, where, in 1104 they were translated to the new cathedral where they repose in aura of sanctity to this day.

Also, Wulfram (late Seventh c.: translation Feast 15 Oct.), who, as the son of an official at the war-like courts of the Frankish Kings Dagobert I and Clovis II, 'never desired anything else than that he might be left to his books' (in the words of Glaister). And he was – as monk and priest, until he was called to court to oversee ecclesiastical matters, and then consecrated Archbishop of Sens, a Metropolitan with the Bishops of Chartres, Orleans, and Paris, among others, as his suffragans. He only served for a couple years, however, in good part due to his desire to do missionary work among the Frisians. This probably involved his working together with St. Willibrord. He recruited monks from 'Fontenelle' abbey (probably that of St. Wandregisilus (668: 22 July, translation Feast 3 Mar.) in Normandy, later called Saint-Wandrille), to which he had donated his paternal estate at Milly. He enjoyed some success, of which one striking example concerned Ovon, selected by lot to be sacrificed to Wodan by being hanged. St. Wulfram begged King Radbod to intervene, but he characteristically refused to interfere with a human sacrifice, or with the people who were crying, 'If your Christ can rescue this boy from death, he shall be His and your servant forever.' St. Wulfram said, 'Then let the will of Christ be done', and fell to praying – until the rope snapped, after two hours. Ovon was baptized and became a monk and priest at Fontenelle – and a principle source for the first *Life* of St. Wulfram. Another success was the conversion of Radbod's son. Glaister writes that Radbod is depicted as looking for some way 'he might embrace Christianity without forsaking his own religion' and the missionaries as 'being equally staunch for the simplicity of the Gospel'. Glaister notes as the sequel to the well-known story of Radbod refusing to go through with his baptism unless assured his ancestors 'are [...] in that Paradise you promise me', that St. Wulfram had perceived 'that Radbod by looking back [...] was not yet fit for the kingdom of heaven. Notwithstanding, he did not cease to strive with him, [...] exhorting him to repentance and baptism.' St. Wulfram eventually returned to Fontenelle and died there. His relics seem for the most part translated to Abbeville. But Glaister reports that Williams the Conqueror, having been supported by the Abbot of Fontenelle in his invasion plans to the tune of 'twelve horsemen, fully equipped, with money for their maintenance', delivered by the hand of the monk Ingulf, remembered him when the abbacy of Croyland fell vacant, and Ingulf brought with him one of the arms of St. Wulfram and celebrated his feast there. But no one now knows why that other Lincolnshire site, the parish church in Grantham, perhaps briefly with the tallest spire in England – and Christendom – is dedicated to St. Wulfram.

21: Benedict of Nursia (c. 550), abandoned his studies to become a hermit at Subiaco – but so many disciples joined him, he organized 12 deaneries of 10 each. Moving to Monte Cassino, he wrote them a Rule which became widely influential – throughout Europe and eventually the world and down the ages until the present.

25: The Annunciation to the Virgin Mary and Conception of Our Lord Jesus Christ (St. Luke 1:26-38). A historical note: the Annunciation and Passion fell upon one day in 2016, as happens infrequently (the fifth time since 1910, with no further occurrence for many, many years to come: Dr. Eleanor Parker says it will not happen again until 2157! – in her very interesting post, “This doubtful day of feast or fast’: Good Friday and the Annunciation”, here:

<http://aclerkoxford.blogspot.nl/2016/03/this-doubtful-day-of-feast-or-fast-good.html>),but which coinciding some scholars think account for the dates of the Annunciation and Christmas. There seems to have been a widespread Jewish belief that the prophets of Israel died on the same dates as their birth or conception, which was combined with an early Christian calculation that the Crucifixion took place on 25 March, allowing the extrapolation that the Annunciation did as well, with the Nativity following nine months later. Other important events were also soon attributed to this date by some, such as the creation and fall of man. In the course of the Middle Ages these came (with no uniform agreement) to include the fall of Lucifer, the averted sacrifice of Isaac, and the passing of Israel through the Red Sea. In his book on *The Reckoning of Time*, Bede considers different contentions as to which date the world’s First Day fell on, including 25 March, and himself argues for 18 March, making 25 March the Eighth Day. Byrthferth of Ramsey follows him in this, and writes in his Old English handbook of 1101 (as translated by Dr. Eleanor Parker), ‘On that day the angels were created; on that day the archangel Gabriel was sent to St Mary; on that day he arose from death; on that day God’s spirit came to mankind. It is holy Sunday; when all days fail, it will endure forever in its festiveness. It is the joy of angels and eternal benefit to all the saints.’

26: Liutger (809): after being a pupil of St. Gregory of Utrecht (c. 775: 25 Aug.), whose Life he later wrote, he studied at York with St. Alcuin (19 May: 804), returning to rebuild St. Lebuin’s church in Deventer, destroyed by pagans ,and to preach as a missionary. Ordained a priest (777), he built several churches, including at Dokkum, preaching missions from there. When driven out by the pagan Saxon invaders, he went to Rome and Monte Cassino. Returning to Frisia, he went on to evangelize the Westphalian Saxons (786), organizing a monastery (795) in a place that takes its name from that fact, Münster. After another successful decade of mission work, he was consecrated bishop there. He died (during a preaching tour) at Werden, the Benedictine monastery he had modeled on Monte Cassino.

30: John Climacus (649), monk, hermit, and eventually abbot on Mt. Sinai, where he wrote ‘The Ladder of Divine Ascent’ (with ‘Klimax’, Greek for ‘Ladder’, later supplying his agnomen, ‘Climacus’), on prayerfully turning step by step from sin and self to God in “the progress of eternity” (a translation of which is available online:

<http://www.prudencetrue.com/images/TheLadderofDivineAscent.pdf>).

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