

St Agnes and St Meinrad

As most of you are aware I have a great love for the Saints. They are an important part of my personal spirituality and their lives have encouraged me in times of despair and given me hope. On January 21 we celebrated two Saints who are important to me. The Church throughout the world celebrated the Feast of St. Agnes. She was a virgin martyr who had consecrated her virginity to Christ and in defense of her virtue she sacrificed her life. She was a girl of only thirteen at the time of her death. St. Agnes was the patron of the Church in Baton Rouge where I was confirmed and entered into full communion with Rome. Therefore she holds a special place in my heart.

The other saint whose feast day was celebrated on January 21 was only done so in select places such as Benedictine monasteries in Indiana and in Switzerland. The saint in question is St. Meinrad the patron saint of hospitality. He was a Benedictine Monk in the Ninth Century who left his community to live as a hermit. He continued to live out the charisms of Benedictine life through work and prayer even at his hermitage. One day two ruffians decided that they would rob the hermitage and set out to do so. St. Meinrad realized what they had come for but he still welcomed them as Christ in accord with the Holy Rule and shared a meal with them. After they had finished the meal he told them to do what they must and they bludgeoned him to death. When his fellow monks discovered what had happened they came to the hermitage and founded a monastery which still stands today called Einsiedeln which means hermitage in German.

The lesson we can draw from St. Meinrad's life is simple. Often people harm us in some way and the most hurtful ways are often non-physical. When we are hurt we often want revenge and we can grow bitter with our desire to hurt the person who hurt us. The person that hurt us is often unaware of how we feel and so instead of hurting them we only hurt ourselves. But when we reflect upon St. Meinrad's life we see that we must truly love our enemies as Christ commanded and in doing so we will have a great victory because it will assure us of God's mercy and love. This is one of the hardest things we will ever do but the benefit to us is far greater than anything else. We will learn to be a forgiving people and if we are a forgiving people then God will be forgiving towards us.

Both St. Agnes and St. Meinrad were willing to give up their lives for gospel values not only because they desired the rewards of heaven but also because they firmly believed what the Gospels taught and were willing to live it out. They were willing to die for Christ and in return they are able to live with Him forever. Their lives might have been short in earthly terms but their legacy has lived on for centuries and to both their credit there are countless men and women whose lives have been changed because of their example. All of us are called to give up our lives for the values of the Gospels and although not many are called to actual martyrdom we should all desire to die with Him so that we can live with Him forever.

In Christ,

Fr. Long