

SAINT BONIFACE, MARTYR, APOSTLE OF GERMANY—680-754 A.D.

Feast: June 5



If someone stopped you in the street and asked you: who was Saint Boniface? The likelihood is that you wouldn't have a clue. Ask the average German and they would know immediately. The really odd thing is Boniface was English and he is credited with the Christianisation of Germany and hailed in that country as a founder of the German church.

One Dictionary of Saints tells us the following:-

In 672 **Saint Boniface was born in England** under the name of Winfrid and educated in the monasteries in Exeter and Nursling. In 716 he set out for the mission in Friesland. In 719 Pope Gregory II gave him authority to preach the Gospel under the name of Boniface. In 722 he was consecrated Bishop and appointed Archbishop in 732. In 737/738 Pope Gregory III appointed him Pontifical Legate for Germany.

Wherever Boniface preached the Gospel, he erected Benedictine monasteries as centres for his work, among them the monastery in Fulda, his burial place. A well-known story is when Boniface went to Geismar in Hesse to cut down the oak tree dedicated to Thor, the Germanic god of war, and used the wood to build a chapel that would later become the monastery in Fritzlar. He founded dioceses in Bavaria, Hesse and Thuringia and reformed the church in Franconia.



On June 5, 754 Boniface died a martyr's death in Friesland. Due to his missionary activities Saint Boniface is worshipped as the 'Apostle of the Germans'. Among the emblems of Boniface are an oak, an axe, a sword, a book.

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