St. Boniface
June 5

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c. 675–754 • England

An abbot from England, Boniface had a strong desire in his heart to convert the German peoples. The Germans were pagans, which means they worshipped many false gods. Boniface wished to teach the Germans about the one, true God and how He sent His only beloved Son to save us from our sins. Boniface traveled to Rome to request permission to preach from the pope. When the pope met Boniface, he saw that the abbot was strong in the Faith. The pope gave him permission, and so Boniface preached in Germany. Later, the pope would make Boniface bishop of all of Germany.

In the dark German forest was a tall and mighty oak tree. It was so ancient, tall, and strong that the Germans believed it was sacred to their false god, Thor. Boniface knew that if he chopped down the "sacred" oak, the Germans would see that the true God was mightier than their false god. So he gathered the Germans in the forest, around the oak, and proclaimed he would chop the tree down.

The Germans' hearts were wrathful. They yelled and cursed this enemy of their god but waited to see what would happen. They believed that Thor would send a lightning bolt to strike Boniface down for threatening his sacred tree. Boniface raised his axe. Some in the crowd yelled louder. Some held their breath. With a powerful stroke, Boniface struck the bark of the oak, but his single blow left only a small notch in the thick trunk. He raised his axe to strike again. All of a sudden, a great rush of wind blasted the tree. The massive oak toppled over with a mighty crash. The onlookers gasped. Then their angry cries turned into cheers: St. Boniface's God had destroyed the sacred oak! The Christian God was the true God! The German pagans were then baptized and became Christians.

Boniface took the wood of the great oak tree and used it to build a church to St. Peter. Then he preached the Gospel all throughout Germany, founding monasteries and convents. For many years he taught the German people about Jesus, just as his heart desired. Even as he grew older, his heart still burned to bring the Good News of Jesus to pagans who lived even farther away in the deep, dark forests. At seventy-nine years of age, he embarked on another missionary trip. On the way, he was attacked by raiding pagans who mistook his chests of books for gold and silver. He and his companions were killed, earning the crown of martyrdom for Jesus.

St. Boniface, help me to share the love of Jesus with those who do not know Him!