

St. Boniface



It was a huge tree! A great sturdy oak, growing near the town of Geismar in what was later to be known as East Germany. It stood near the top of Mount Gudenberg and it was sacred to the great Norse god of thunder, Thor.

That, at least, was what the local people said. So, naturally enough, when this Englishman turned up and said he was going to cut the tree down, they were horrified. What would Thor do to such a man? Strike him dead with lightning seemed the most likely answer. They were also more than a little terrified for themselves. Surely Thor would punish them for allowing anyone to damage, never mind destroy, his precious oak tree.

In the end, a huge crowd decided it was worth that risk. They'd climb Mount Gudenberg and watch the

Englishman get struck by lightning.

The Englishman's name was Boniface, and he was both a monk and a priest. He'd come to what was then a pagan land to teach its people the Christian message of love and hope, and he'd spent two years learning their language in order to be able to do this.

Now he wanted to prove that the old Norse gods such as Thor had no power over a Christian believer. More than that, he wanted to prove that the Norse gods weren't even real.

So he climbed the hill to the so-called "Thor's Oak" with a few fellow monks and a large axe. The local people followed. They felt safe—and certain that Thor would know who was damaging his oak. He would surely strike Boniface dead for this terrible insult to him and his tree.

Boniface gripped the axe and took a mighty swing. The blade sank into the trunk of the tree. Boniface wrenched it free and took another swipe. Again the blade sank into the wood.

By now there was a rustling in its upper branches. A wind was getting up. The crowd all had the same thought. Thor's getting angry.

Boniface and his monks dealt a few more blows to the tree. Now its upper branches were shaking violently.

Then, with a mighty creak and a groan, the shuddered and began to fall. As its upper branches toppled to the ground, they broke and splintered.

The locals were positive that Thor had shown his power. Boniface must be dead under the weight of the trunk. But then he stepped smiling out of the pile of broken branches and shook some twigs out of his monk's habit.

"So what have you to say now?" he asked. "Where was Thor? I told you he wasn't real."

The people had to admit that Thor appeared to have no power over a Christian. Some immediately decided to become Christians. Over the days and weeks that followed, more and more followed their example. Soon much of the area was Christian.

As for the tree, Boniface chopped and sawed it up and used the wood to build a small wooden church on that very spot, naming the church Saint Peter's.

This story about St. Boniface is an excellent example of how all creation points to God. The mighty oak helped St. Boniface lead those watching to God. It praised and glorified God when it fell, showing the power of God. Then Boniface used its wood to glorify God by building a church. The Bible has many verses about creation praising God, here are a few.

Psalms 66:4 - All the earth worships You and signs praises to You; they sing praises to Your name.

Psalms 19:1 - The heavens declare the glory of God, and sky above proclaims his handiwork.

John 1:3 - All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

Revelation 5:13 - And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

St. Boniface, pray for us!



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