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Along with the High Feast of Pentecost, today is also the feast day of St. Boniface. St. Boniface is particularly important to our parish, as his relic is in our Altar. A literal piece of him is here. It may sound strange but the placing of a relic in the altar of our churches is an ancient tradition which comes from the Early Church's practice of saying Mass in the catacombs on the tombs of martyrs. His statue is also on the Gospel side, or the right side of our altar. St. Boniface lived in the 700s AD, and began his life as an English monk, before becoming a missionary and eventually the Bishop of Germany.

Our statue of St. Boniface depicts him in the vestments of a Bishop, with a sword, books, an axe, and a tree stump. He was made a Bishop because of his extraordinary zeal as a missionary, the marks of which show the hand of the Holy Spirit. It is written of him, *the servant of God, burning with zeal for the divine honor and the salvation of souls, never ceased to bewail, night and day, the misfortune of those nations which lay benighted in the shades of idolatry...and wherever he came, baptized many thousands of idolaters, destroyed temples, and built churches.* One such temple or shrine he destroyed is why his statue also depicts an axe and tree stump. One his return from a visit with Pope Gregory II, he decided to try to root out the pagan superstitions which seriously distracted new converts from the stability of their faith. The German tribes, along with many other primitive peoples in ancient Europe, were tree-worshippers. Thor, the god of thunder, was one of the principal Teutonic deities, and an ancient oak, which stood on the summit of Mt. Gudenberg was sacred to him. On a day publicly announced, and watched by an awe-struck crowd, which had warned them that if they cut down the sacred tree Thor would strike them dead, Boniface and his followers attacked the sacred oak with axes. It is written that *after a few blows, the huge tree crashed to the earth, splitting into four parts. The terrified tribesmen, who had expected a punishment to fall instantly on the perpetrators of such an outrage, now saw that their god was powerless to protect even his own sanctuary.*

To commemorate the victory, Boniface built a chapel on the spot. And from that time on the work of evangelization in Hesse proceeded steadily. But the idolaters took matters into their own hands, and a few years later, on Pentecost Sunday, while St. Boniface was reading in his tent, awaiting to receive new converts

from that part of Germany, a band of armed men stormed into the tent and killed St. Boniface with the sword. Which is why St. Boniface is depicted holding a sword, the instrument of his martyrdom. With his last breath, St. Boniface encouraged his companions to be courageous and not to be afraid to die a martyr's death. The pagans had hoped to also find a treasure of gold and silver, but only found several holy relics and a few books. They sought for earthly treasure and killed the only ones who could have given them heavenly treasures for all eternity.

We see in the life of St. Boniface the effects of Pentecost which had happened a thousand years before him, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the upper room upon the disciples. The same Holy Spirit that stirred St. Peter and the Disciples to preach and speak in the tongues of all within earshot, and converting in one day three thousand to Christ, is the same Holy Spirit that enabled St. Boniface to convert thousands in Germany in the 8th century. After hearing his amazing story, we may consider how badly we need a modern-day St. Boniface, a great missionary Bishop to go out into our modern and fallen world and convert thousands to Christ. But the truth is that we do not just need another great missionary Bishop full of the Holy Ghost, but priests and deacons, servers, teachers, students, vestrymen, and laymen from every walk of life filled with the Spirit of God, fortified, and strengthened by the seven Sacraments. This is the great lesson of Pentecost, that each of one of us, regardless of his vocation in life have a part to play in the building up of the Kingdom of Heaven. As the Scriptures remind us, *for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also, is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.* The Holy Spirit is not just the gift for the great saints but for each one of us. It is what each of us have been baptized into, and through the Holy Spirit receiving gifts to better help us serve Christ in this world.

We have been reminded this morning that during our baptisms the Church prayed that we *not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil: and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto our life's end.* We have been reminded that we are called to follow in the footsteps of Christ and taking for our examples those who have gone before, St. Peter, St. Boniface, all the disciples and apostles, martyrs, virgins, and prophets. The same Holy Spirit that filled St. Peter,

St. Boniface and all the great saints of old with wisdom and courage wishes to fill us too.