

Which Saint Arnoldus (Arnold) Said:

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“From man’s sweat and God’s love, beer came into the world.”

Throughout his life, Arnold, Bishop of Metz, lectured the peasants on the benefits of drinking beer, which was made safe by boiling and processing. “Don’t drink the water,” he urged, “drink the beer.” So strong was his faith in beer power that, in the midst of a plague, he plunged his crucifix into a brew kettle (what a great symbol for the beer-religion connection!) and persuaded the locals to drink only from that “holy” vessel. His action stopped the spread of illness.

For the Bishop’s crowning beer miracle, though, the citizens of Metz had to wait until after his death. It was well worth the wait – at least for those who bore his bones from the monastery where he died back (by popular demand) to the town of Metz. According to one version, the worn-out porters stopped off at an inn for a pint. With ale enough for only one glass, Arnold kindly interceded from his casket. As the men passed the mug around, it miraculously refilled until the thirsts of all had been quenched.

In the second version, the thirsty porters appealed to God for refreshment en route. Via Arnold, God complied, shooting lashings of icy ale out of the casket and soaking all present. It’s raining beer, hallelujah! As if that were not enough to endear the Bishop of Metz to beer lovers everywhere, he is also credited with the famous words, “From man’s sweat and God’s love, beer came into the world.”

Arnold of Soissons is the patron saint of hop pickers, probably because he preached in the hop-growing region of Brabant, in what is now Belgium. He pulled his beer proliferation number after a monastery roof collapsed in Flanders, destroying the monk’s supply of beer. With only a few sad barrels remaining, Arnold asked God to lend a hand. The barrels multiplied, the monks and townsfolk rejoiced, and Arnold was popularly canonized on the spot. Ingenious as well as miraculous, he also came up with the idea of using straw cones (the kind used in bee keeping) as a filter to clarify beer.

Arnold number three worked his magic on the battlefield. Before becoming a Benedictine monk, he belonged to a military order, making a name for himself as “Arnulph the Strong of Oudenaarde.” He fought with God, and beer, on his side. Once during a battle in Flanders, he magicked mugsful of cold ale out of heavenly thin air to revive his flagging soldiers – who, of course, went on to win. Later, he founded the Abbey of St. Peter in Oudenburg, where he learned the art of earthly brewing. Both Arnold number two (Soissons) and Arnold number three (Oudenaarde) lived in the 11th century, preached in Flanders, wrought numerous miracles, promoted beer and became patron saints of Belgian brewers. These similarities perhaps explain why their stories and legends are sometimes attributed to one and sometimes to the other, depending upon the source.