

Upcoming Commemorations

Benedict the African, confessor, died 1589

Sunday, April 4, 2021

Born a slave on the island of Sicily, Benedict lived as a hermit until the pope ordered all hermits to attach themselves to a monastery, at which time Benedict joined the Franciscans. Though illiterate, he was highly respected as a confessor and later superior of his community.

Albrecht Dürer, died 1528; Matthias Grünewald, died 1529; Lucas Cranach, died 1553; artists

Tuesday, April 6, 2021

These great artists revealed through their work the mystery of salvation and the wonder of creation. Dürer's work reflected the apocalyptic spirit of his time. Though he remained a Roman Catholic, he was sympathetic to Martin Luther's reforming work. Grünewald's paintings are known for their dramatic forms, vivid colors, and depiction of light. Cranach's work includes many fine religious examples and several portraits of Martin Luther. Cranach was also widely known for his woodcuts.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian, died 1945

Friday, April 9, 2021

Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who wrote profoundly, yet in an accessible manner. In the Second World War, he became a leader of the Confessing Church in Germany that resisted the Nazi movement. Linked to a plot to kill Hitler, he was hanged shortly before the end of the war.

Mikael Agricola, Bishop of Turku, died 1557

Saturday, April 10, 2021

Consecrated bishop of Turku, Finland, without the approval of the pope, Agricola began a reform along Lutheran lines. In only three years, he translated the New Testament and worship texts into Finnish, in the process establishing the rules of Finnish writing that are still used today.

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Gospel Message

Resurrection of Jesus, Easter Day

April 4, 2021

On the Other Side of Fear

The very last verse of this morning's gospel comprises what scholars believe to be the original ending of Mark. Somewhat alarmingly, the final words are "they were afraid" (Mark 16:8). If you crack open your Bible today, you'll see a few other paragraphs and endings beyond this verse; however, Mark 16:8 is thought to have been the original end to the book.

As people who are used to greeting Easter morning with flowers, banners, trumpets, and boisterous hymns, this original ending to Mark, filled with fear and silence, isn't quite what we expect to find at the empty tomb! The end of Mark's Easter story can feel disquieting; maybe that's why a faithful person added another ending or two.

Fear and silence are hallmarks of human life. Anyone who says they have never been afraid is either living under a rock or probably not sharing the full truth of their experience of things. As vulnerable human creatures, we are susceptible to fear, which can cascade into silence at our worst when we are most frightened. That is exactly where we meet the disciples today.

Yet someone, sometime, somewhere, had to have said something, or else we would not be here worshiping at Easter. At some point joy crept up and leapt over the disciples' terror and paralysis. At some point the words were blurted out and released into the air with gladness: "Christ is risen, alleluia!"

Today, we enter the story on the other side of fear and silence. Someone among those disciples did indeed proclaim the truth: Christ is risen! We can rest assured knowing that despair and death don't have the last word. Drawn into the resurrection life of Jesus, we are invited to take part in this movement of God, shouting with loud praise, "Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!"

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