

Paulinus 10 October

First Bishop of York, Missionary, 644 — Commemoration

Paulinus was a Roman monk who was made a bishop in the year 625 and sent to the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, where he settled at York and ministered to the few Christians at the court of King Edwin.

The pagan king engaged Paulinus in long private discussions about the Christian faith and eventually called a council of his nobles to debate whether he should accept Paulinus's religion. One of them answered in the classic tones of the Anglo-Saxon heritage and said: "This, O King, is how the present life of man appears to me in comparison with that time which is unknown. You are sitting feasting with your nobles in winter time; the fire is burning on the hearth in the middle of the hall and all inside is warm, while outside the wintry storms of rain and snow are raging; and a sparrow flies swiftly through the hall. It enters in at one door and quickly flies out through the other. For the few moments it is inside, the storm and wintry tempest cannot touch it, but after the briefest moment of calm it flits from your sight, out of the wintry storm and into it again. So this life of man appears but a moment; what follows or indeed what went before, we know not at all. If this new doctrine brings us more certain information, it seems right that we should accept it." The council decided that Edwin would do right to become a Christian; and on Easter Day, 627, Paulinus baptized him.

Many Northumbrian noblemen followed their king's example, and Paulinus was able to extend his mission beyond York, founding churches as far south as Lincoln. But his work suffered a terrific setback when Edwin was killed in battle with the pagan Mercians, who then ravaged the Northumbrian church. Paulinus decided to quit northern England and return to Kent, where he was made bishop of Rochester and devoted himself to his flock until his death in the year 644.

Sentence

Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord! *Isaiah 2.5*

Collect

Almighty God,
you sent your holy servant Paulinus
to preach the gospel of peace
in a kingdom of warriors,
that those who feared the darkness of their fate
might know the living splendour of your light.
Grant us, after his example,
so to manifest our adoption as your children
that we may succour the hopeless
and bring peace to war-filled hearts;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Isaiah 2.2-5 Psalm 27.1-6

Refrain The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Matthew 5.14-16

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
open our hearts to the riches of your grace
that the gifts which we offer with our hands
may be made perfect with your justice,
and the service which we render with our lips
may be heard in the tabernacle of your glory.
We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Preface of a Saint

Prayer after Communion

Grant us, Almighty God,
so to remember your holy servant Paulinus,
that we may share in his witness
and bring those who have no hope
to place their whole confidence in you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.