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The missionary and spiritual father in Germany, whose holiday we celebrate today, may shed light on some things that were once well understood, but now we are now taking for granted for the most part. Saint Boniface, the martyr and patron of Germany, traveled from England to Frisia and Bavaria, or modern Germany, in the seventh century to preach Christianity to mostly pagan tribes there, and to organize a scattered community of Christians of the region. Paganism practiced by the locals was known for the worship of the Torah, the God of Thunder. However, it wasn't Thor we know who fights galactic villains in comics and on silver screens. This Thor demanded human sacrifice. In the winter ritual, which took place under the Wuthering Oak tree, which the pagans dedicated to this God of Thunder, the pagans often sacrificed the child. During one of these rituals in the winter of 722, Saint Boniface came to the place of sacrifice with an evangelical message that shocked the Gentiles. He cut down a large oak tree with an axe before they could make their sacrifice. This in itself surprised them because, being so closely associated with the deity, they believed that the tree could not be felled and even boasted that God Boniface could not destroy the Torah tree. After the large oak fell, St. Boniface replaced it with a small Christmas tree and told the Gentiles about the child Jesus. Many people today have good reason to believe that these words of his words, referring to this young spruce, are the origins of the Christmas tree tradition: This little tree, a small child of the forest, must be your holy tree tonight. It's the wood of the world... It is a sign of infinite life, for its leaves are always green. See how he points up to the sky. Let it be called the tree of Christ the Child; collect about it, not in the wild forest, but in your own homes; there he will shelter not the affairs of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness. Thor and Bonifas My knowledge of the Torah is limited to movies and what I learned about mythology in high school. I know that he is the son of Odin, that he is literally the man who was Thursday (since the weekday was actually named after him) and that his weapon of choice is the hammer only he can own, and that's all I know. But even this elementary knowledge of the Torah is enough to appreciate how the Holy Boniphis evangelize these pagans who worshipped the God of Thunder. Saint Boniface came to Germany on a mission to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ into pagan society, and he addressed them through a display of physical strength that challenged that of God. The story of Saint Boniface and the Oak of Thunder so powerfully testifies to the absolute superiority that God gave to the saints over the belief in the pagan gods. God would not allow anything to stop these saints in their mission to lead the tribes of Europe to the truth of Christianity. Of course we can look back today and say it's probably just an overgrown oak tree, but suspend your empirical mind for a moment imagine what this act means for these German people to see that tree is falling. There are many stories like this from medieval Europe, but few are such a powerful symbol for uprooting paganism and establishing a Christian society in Germany, and the fact that it is associated with Christmas is so appropriate. Christmas has been a landmark holiday in Northern Europe since Christianity first came to the region, as the region was already rich in history, traditions, customs and mythology. In addition, the region's enchanted forests and vibrant age-old folk culture have made it ripe for the gospel, and these features continue to make Northern Europe the perfect backdrop for a holy day like Christmas. And yet, in the midst of all the celebrations associated with the holiday, Saint Boniface receives little if any attention, despite his contribution to the way the birth of Christ is celebrated today. It's about more than Christmas At the moment you may be wondering why I'm giving so much holiday attention that's six months away. After all, it is June, and we should talk about our beach plans and summer holidays. Well, apart from giving St. Boniface the recognition it deserves, I think this patron of Germany is more relevant today than the history of the Christmas tree might explain. Just a few days ago, Pope Francis indirectly honored the legacy of St. Boniface when he supported the trans-government in Germany. The Vatican recently rejected a proposal by German bishops to offer communion to Protestants who are married to Catholics. The logic of German bishops is that by not offering Communion to these Protestant spouses of Catholics, the Church works against any effort to achieve full communication with them. Whether a Protestant spouse thinks that the eucharist is the body and blood of Jesus seems to them to be an afterthought. Blocking the unfavorable attempt of German bishops on ecumenism, Pope Francis and the Vatican acted as the bard of Peter, who stood against pounding waves that would try to sink him. In the time of St. Boniface, these waves would have been the paganism of the Germanic tribes. Today, the waves are more like syncretism, which reveres other religions, like many pagan gods. Saint Boniface would be proud. With this proclamation blocking intercommunal communication, perhaps the German bishops will take into account the fullness of the Faith and remember the patron saint of their country, who said, Let us preach the whole plan of God to the strong and humble, the rich and the poor, people of any rank and age, as much as God gives us strength, in the season and off season. It is a persistent, immovable faith that makes saints heroic, and this is the kind of heroism our culture needs. Imagine a scene on a silver screen where Marvel's Thor watches Saint Boniface chop a tree dedicated to a pagan god. The way Marvel portrays Thor in movies today, he's wonderful, Character, But But it is interesting to see our Christian history clash with this pagan mythology today. We watch movies with an inner desire to experience something heroic. If only popular culture had more openly accepted the stories of saints, I think we would have found much more complete and real examples of heroism, such as Saint Boniface. Read more about this saint in Steve Weidenkop's article St. Boniface and the Christmas tree. You can also like: Can Catholics receive communion in non-Catholic churches? A quick primer on Transubstantiation Moral Relativism and Culture Meh When the average person thinks of a Catholic saint, I'd venture to guess that it's not the fearless, axe-wielding, hammer-breaking, oak-crushing, converter pagans that comes to mind. And yet, that's exactly the guy St. Boniface was. Born around 680 in England, Boniface entered a Benedictine monastery before being commissioned by the pope to preach Christianity to modern Germany, first as a priest, and eventually as bishop. Under the protection of Charles Martel, Boniface traveled throughout Germany, resting regions that had already been introduced to Christianity and bringing light to those who did not. Boniface, with his tireless work, his gift for organization, and his adaptable, friendly but solid character, has found great success in his travels, said Pope Benedict XVI in 2009. Here Boniface is described (albeit dramatized for the story) by Henry Van Dyke in The First Christmas Tree (1897). What a man he was! Fair and small but straight, like a spear and strong as an oak staff. His face was still young; smooth skin was bronze wind and sun. His gray eyes, pure and kind, flashed like fire when he spoke of his adventures, and of the evil deeds of the false priests with whom he competed. (1) About 723 years of Boniface traveled with a small party in the region of Lower Hesse. He knew of the Pagan community near Geismar, who in the middle of winter made a human sacrifice (child, usually) to the torah (yes, Thor) at the base of their sacred oak, Wuthering Oak. Boniface, partly on the advice of the bishop's brother, wanted to destroy the Thunder Oak in order not only to save the lives of human sacrifices, but also to show the Gentiles that he would not be struck by lightning at the hands of Thor. As the story goes, Boniface and his companions, reaching the village on Christmas Eve, arrived at the victim's scene in time enough to abort her. With the Episcopal attorneys (crozier) in his hands, Bonifas approached the pagan crowd that surrounded the base of thundery Oak, telling his group, Here is the Thunder Oak, and here the cross of Christ will break the hammer of the false god Thor. With a small child laid out for the victim, the executioner raised the hammer high. But on the slump, Boniface extended his crozier to block the blow, miraculously breaking the great hammer and save the life of the child. After that, Boniface is said to have proclaimed to the people: Listen, sons of the forest! No blood will flow tonight, except that pity is pulled out of the mother's breast. For this is the birth-night of Christ, the son of the Almighty, the Savior of mankind. He is fairer than Baldr Beautiful, more than One Wise, kinder than Freya the Good. Ever since he came, the sacrifice has ended. The dark Thor you called in vain is dead. Deep in the shades of Niffelheim it is lost forever. And now on this night of Christ you will begin to live. This bloody tree will no longer cloud your land. In the name of god, I will destroy it. (2) Boniface took the axe side by side and, as legend has it, took one mighty swing on the oak when a large gust of wind climbed through the forest and felled down the tree, roots and all. It lies on the forest floor, broken into four parts. Although Boniface was later a chapel built of wood, our history leads us to what stood just behind the ruins of a mighty tree. The Apostle of Germany continued to preach to the striking German peoples, who were in disbelief that this fighter Thunder Oak torus was not struck by their god. Boniface looked beyond where the oak tree lay, pointing to a small, humble Christmas tree, saying: This little tree, a small child of the forest, will be your holy tree tonight. It's the wood of the world... It is a sign of infinite life, for its leaves are always green. See how he points up to the sky. Let it be called the tree of Christ the Child; collect about it, not in the wild forest, but in your own homes; there he will shelter not the affairs of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness. (3) And so, the Germans began a new tradition that night that stretches to the present day. By bringing spruce into their homes, decorating it with candles and ornaments and celebrating the birth of the Savior, the Apostle of Germany and his flock gave us what we now know as a Christmas tree. Originally posted on Catholic Hill st boniface and the christmas tree story

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