

Fides Quae

A Festal Letter for Pastors of the Kansas District

HOMILETICAL

The Eternal Gospel

Fr. Ian Kinney



HISTORICAL

“Introibo ad Altare Dei”:

An Historic Look at Missions

Fr. Ian Kinney

PRACTICAL

Glory to God in the Highest and Peace to
His People on Earth

Fr. Mark Lovett



LITURGICAL

Liturgical Musings, Sort Of

Fr. Mark Lovett

FROM THE PRESS

Greetings in the Name of Jesus,

At whose Name, every head should bow (Phil 2:10-11). As you proclaim this holy Name, may you be strengthened by the angels and encouraged by the saints. As we enter into the latter half of Trinitytide, welcome to the Holy Cross issue of *Fides Quae*.

Thanks be to Christ the bearer of the Holy Cross who ensured that now

*Fulfilled is all that David told
In sure prophetic song of old,
That God the nations' king should be
And reign in triumph from the Tree. (LSB 455)*

To encourage you in your preaching and teaching of this King and His Tree, we are excited to offer you the following articles.

To support your preaching, Father Kinney has included an excerpt of a Reformation homily. In which, he preaches that we must focus on the “eternal Gospel flying overhead” and not be distracted by all the garbage swimming around below. Father Kinney also shows us how the need for reformation is nothing new.

To support your practical day to day life, Father Lovett has composed a work of art on the ordered life. Specifically, that it should be one that gives glory to God in all things. He reminds us that we have the peace that passes all understanding and that this provides us a reason for order.

To support your teaching, Father Kinney has written a part two to Father Lovett’s historic look at missions. Here, Father Kinney outlines four historic missionaries of the church—Patrick, Boniface, Cyril, and Methodius—and highlights their mission work as a template for our own.

Finally, on a liturgical note, Father Lovett reminds us that we as pastors should be glad when we go to the house of the Lord. We should not groan like we are going to some nine-to-five day job. But as we conduct the liturgy, he reminds us to take pains to make sure our hearts are right, our actions are just, our words are holy, and our conduct above reproach. In short, that we do the work of an evangelist and fulfill our ministry.

We pray that these will be an encouragement to you as you carry out the work of the Steward of the Mysteries of God. For you we pray: O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree, As Thou hast promised, draw us all to Thee.

✠ The Editors at St. John the Baptist Press ✠



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“INTROIBO AD ALTARE DEI” An Historic Look at Missions

“Let us die, if God wills it, for the sacred laws of our fathers, that with them we may deserve to win an eternal heritage. Let us not be dumb dogs nor silent watchmen, nor hirelings who flee before the wolf, but zealous shepherds, watching over the flock of Christ, preaching the whole counsel of Christ.”¹

These are the words of Saint Boniface of Mainz—the preeminent and foundational missionary to the German people. In the last issue, Father Lovett pointed out that the true purpose of missions cannot be anything other than the preaching of the Gospel. To further his point, let us consider, from a historical perspective, what Saint Patrick, Saint Boniface, and Saints Cyril and Methodius teach about missions. Namely, that it is an unequivocal focus on the Word of God and Sacraments of Christ.

Saint Patrick was a missionary to the Irish. His mission work was centered on Christ, it was domestic, and it intentionally focused on the Word of God. Patrick was a pastor in the 400s and was kidnapped and sold as a slave to Ireland. He escaped and eventually came back to convert his captors and set *them* free from their bondage to sin. When Patrick did missions, it was to teach them of Christ. He taught the faith passed down from the apostles. Even though my ancestors had countless gods, Patrick didn’t water down the doctrine of the Church. He did not give into their paganism but purely proclaimed the doctrine of the Three-in-One and One-in-Three.

Saint Boniface, the missionary to the Germans, was a pastor in the 600s who was sent to an unsettled land the Romans called Germania. In those days, your ancestors worshipped trees. Saint Boniface came as a missionary to uproot the old religion and plant a new one. In this effort, Boniface found the great oak that was worshiped by the local pagans and dedicated to Thor. In his mission work, he chopped it down. He felled Thor’s Oak and used the wood to build a church on

the very site, in which the Word of God would be preached and the Sacraments of Christ administered for centuries. Like Patrick, the mission work of Boniface was centralized around the altar of God and preaching of Christ.

Finally, there are Cyril and Methodius, the missionaries to the Slavs in the 800s. When they arrived in the Slavic region, they found that the people did not have a written language. Because of their emphasis on true missionary work surrounding the Word of God, they created a writing system for the ancient Slavic tribes, commonly called “Cyrillic.” What an unbelievable thing that their emphasis on the Word of God caused them to invent a writing system so that the faithful could have the Scriptures!

Boniface, Patrick, and Cyril and Methodius, while all separated by time, space, and language, are united in a fervent desire for the mission of God. This mission of God is the preaching of the Gospel. Patrick taught the doctrines of the Church to polytheistic heathens. Boniface destroyed Germanic *Asherim* and built altars out of the scrap wood. Cyril spent sleepless nights inventing an alphabet. All of this was for the mission of God. That through them, in the Church, the Good Shepherd would be able to call His own because they learned His voice.

And so, with Saint Patrick, let us focus on the true center of missions:

*I bind this day to me forever,
By pow’r of faith, Christ’s incarnation,
His Baptism in the Jordan River,
His cross of death for my salvation,
His bursting from the spiced tomb,
His riding up the heav’nly way,
His coming at the day of doom,
I bind unto myself today. (LSB 604)*

¹ Saint Boniface, *The English Correspondence of Saint Boniface: Being for the Most Part Letters Exchanged Between the Apostle of the Germans and His English Friends*, trans. Edward Kylie (London: Chatto & Windus, 1911), 188.



St. Paul's from Brewery Bridge, Gustav Doré, 1872.

LITURGICAL MUSINGS, SORT OF

We love going to church, or so we would say to anyone who asks. (Though some will try shock-and-awe and talk about how they don't like going to church but it's not about liking it, it's about...blah, blah, blah). It is good to go to the house of the Lord. We should like going to church. We often don't like it though, or at least it becomes difficult to like because we have to deal with alligators in the congregation. People. They need things from us. They need our joy and smile; they need our sympathy; they need to put us in our place; they need us to be humbled. It's exhausting.

But "going to church" isn't a business meeting and it is not a customer-based event. You're a pastor, not an event planner. You're an overseer of doctrine and life, not a peddler of wares. It's not a "get-together." We should be careful about describing holy things with cheap phrases, which is usually done so we don't have to take things too seriously. You stand on holy ground, not on "good feelings" ground. Going to church, of course, just means traveling to a building but it is shorthand for "going to worship God." We don't simply "go to church," we gather in the Spirit, in the name of Jesus, to worship God the Father.

I can hear someone saying, "Don't we worship Jesus, too? What about the Holy Spirit?" Yes, we worship Them, too. However, the Father is greater than the Son (so says the Son) and the Holy Spirit is given to comfort us with the Word of God (the Son) so that we would find a loving and compassionate God in the Father. We go to worship God the Father as Jesus says, "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him" (John 4:23)—equal to the Father in His divinity but less than the Father according to His humanity.

Being gathered in the Spirit in the name of Jesus to worship God the Father is what happens when we "go to church." How do we worship God the Father? You know how: by giving thanks, by offering our bodies as living

sacrifices, meaning giving ourselves to good works—works of the Father. Jesus says, "the Father who dwells in Me does His work...and greater works than these [you] will do because I am going to the Father" (John 14:10, 12). This means, of course, that we worship God the Father in all we do, doing all things to the glory of God. Would the trope be true, then, that since we worship God in all that we do we don't need to go to church? Is it true that we worship at home or at work or even at play and so "going to church" is a nice, albeit unnecessary, addition to our worship? We must say no.

But it's a weak "no," relegated to the law that we must go to church because it is written that we ought not neglect the gathering, as is the habit of some (Heb 10:25). Going to church becomes, despite its Gospel-oriented message, a thing of the law. We must go; we must take the Sacrament; we must gather. Why? Because if we don't our churches will close, and we'll be out of a job and the Synod will have failed (being a Synod of numbers and statistics). We even boast in Bible classes, etc., that ultimately going to church isn't necessary because only faith matters and people can believe—Luther even says so!—even if they've gone a long time without the Sacrament. The truth is, no matter how beautifully we package "going to church," we've shot ourselves in the foot—not because we preach justification by grace alone through faith alone, but because we don't understand worship.

We have said in the past that we go to worship God and now we say that worship is not something we do but something God does for us. The cart and the horse are not only out of order, they don't seem to even be around.

We go to church to worship God the Father because in going to church we are submitting ourselves to His Church. We get so wrapped up in arguing about ceremony that we actually begin to talk as though "church" is just an agreed-upon form of interacting with one another when God is the subject matter. Church becomes a self-expression, even if somewhat collective. We are full of ourselves. Ceremony becomes just "things we do" and rites merely become "things we have to do." We don't like



ceremony because it makes us feel inadequate and very self-aware (and then we must take things seriously). We don't know what to make of rites because we're not saved by rites but by faith, although rites (e.g. Baptism) are necessary. Jesus instituted rites so that we would be saved by faith. Knock that one around for a while.

You're a pastor. You're the overseer of the congregation that the Holy Spirit has placed you over. Think about worship. Think about doing the works of the Father in Spirit and in truth. Don't think about what the people will do or what stuff you can give them to do. Don't "plan" worship services so that it's fulfilling or meaningful or "impactful" or (all the worse) "worshipful". Don't treat the saints of God as though they need to be entertained by

your cleverness or ingenuity (or your down-to-earthness). They are the chosen people, the royal priesthood. They have been called to pray, praise, and give thanks. They have not been called to come and watch, applaud, and feel good. Stop worrying about the experience. The Christians God has given you (Acts 20:28) have been gathered by God so that they can perform the works of God by believing on Him Whom He has sent and by doing the works God does in them, which is to say: to be reconciled to Him in Christ. Take pains to make sure your heart is right, your actions are just, your words are holy, and your conduct above reproach. Fulfill your ministry.

Peace be with you all. ✠

The Vision of the Cross, Gustav Doré, 1861.

THE ETERNAL GOSPEL

AN EXCERPT FROM A HOMILY FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF THE REFORMATION BY FATHER IAN KINNEY, 2023

John said, “I looked up...and in the sky and I saw an angel flying overhead with an eternal gospel to proclaim” (Rev 14:1, 6).

The Reformation was, first and foremost, all about the Eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was then, and it still is now.

Because Luther didn’t do anything new. If Luther did something new, he made a mistake. The Reformation is not about doing something “new”—that would be “innovation”, not reformation.

The Reformation is not about doing something new but doing something old. The Reformation is not about Luther setting us free from the tyranny of the pope, it is about rediscovering how Christ set us free from the tyranny of sin.

It is not about inventing something new; it is remembering something that was forgotten. Because if Luther did something new, he did something wrong.

But he didn’t. When the Reformation began this day, 507 years ago. It was nothing new. The church always goes through seasons when reform is needed. And every time it happens, it is never inventing something new, it is remembering what was forgotten.

The first time the Church saw reformation would be Samuel. Almost 3,000 years before Luther picked up a hammer, the church was already in need of reformation. In 1 Samuel, Samuel is dedicated to serve the church as a toddler. He grew up in a time when we had these judges running around trying just to put band aids on bullet holes. He grew up in the sanctuary where the pastors didn’t teach, where the Bible wasn’t read, where all the clergy were corrupt, as Samuel says, “as the light in the eyes [of faith] had grown dim” (1 Sam 3:2, 4:15). The Church needed a reformation and the Eternal Gospel. But that was nothing new.

Then 400 years later, there was the great reforming king Josiah. Josiah was anointed king at 8 years old. At his time, the sacraments had been forgotten, no one even knew

where the Bible was, the clergy brought in the worship of their contemporaries, and the sanctuary was being used as a kind of storage shed. Josiah was trying to do what was right in the eyes of the Lord, so he thought the sanctuary was a good place to start.

So, he sent the priest in to find the silver to pay men to clean the church. The priest came out very quiet and somber. He looked up at the king and said, “we didn’t find any money...but we found a book”. A dusty book, a forgotten book, and book that had been lost for decades. So, Scripture recounts how the priest opened the book and began to read “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...” It was the first time in generations anyone had heard, seen, or read a Bible. Josiah was cut to the heart. He began to reform the Church. He exiled the idolatrous priests, he taught the people the Scriptures, he cut down the idols, and turned to God’s word (c.f. 2 Kgs 22-23). The Church needed a reformation and the Eternal Gospel. But that was nothing new.

Then about 200 years later there was the priest, Ezra. A pastor trained in the Scriptures who came to a people who had completely forgotten God’s Word. Now this time, they hadn’t forgotten where the Bible was, but when Ezra stood up to read it to them, they couldn’t even understand the language in which it was spoken. The Church was in ruin and the men had no idea what it meant to be God’s people (c.f. Ezra 7-10, Neh 8). The Church needed a reformation and the Eternal Gospel. But that was nothing new.

Finally, there was a pastor named Luther. Who showed up at a time when we were taught we had to buy God’s love and earn His mercy. He showed up a time when no one knew the Lord’s Prayer, none of the pastors knew how to read, and people had no clue what the gospel was.

Jesus said that if you abide in my word, you are my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free (John 8:31-32). This truth is the eternal gospel. That sin was so severe that the only way that we could be justified was through the grace and redemption of Christ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to

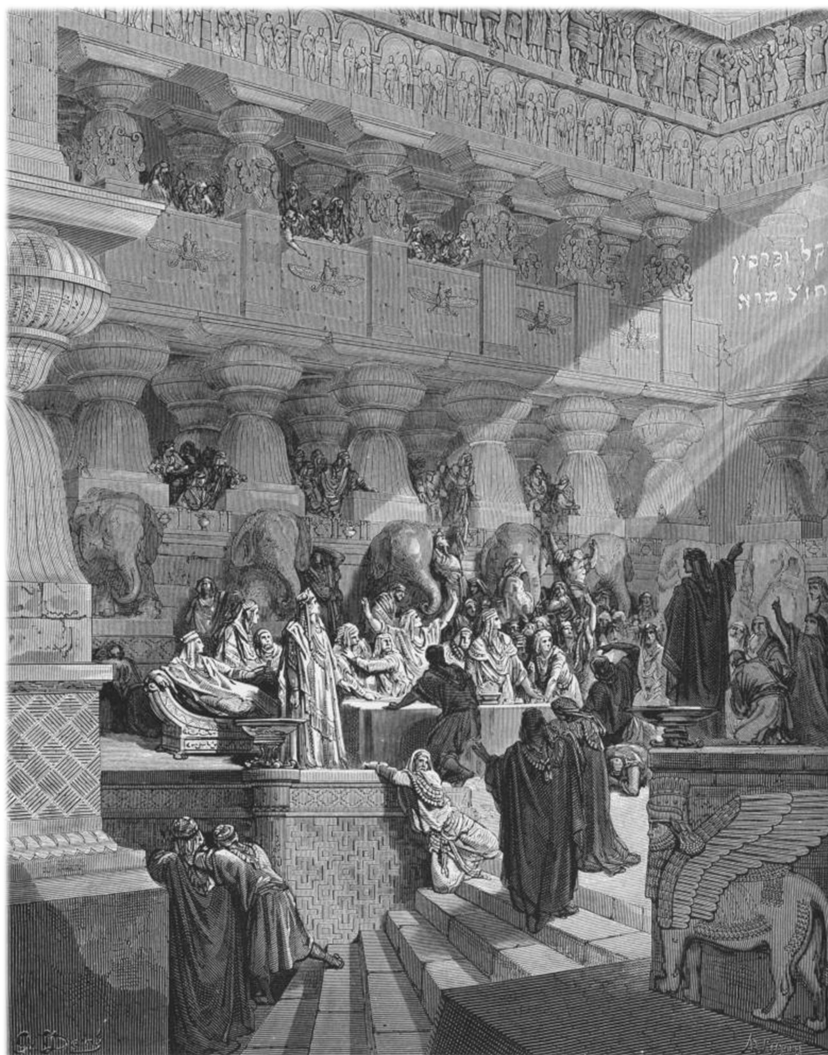
be received by faith (Rom 3:25). Because all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God (Rom 3:23), all need Christ who is the Righteousness of God incarnate. Every time we forget that, we need a reformation. But it is nothing new.

The world spins out of control but the cross stands still. In the next generation Christ, His Word, His grace, and His Church will not only remain but will remain unchanged. By then, Bibles will be dusty, churches will be empty, clergy will be corrupt and lazy, many will probably forget the Gospel, and the love of so many will grow cold. By then, we will probably need another reformation just like we do today. But we must not be like the Athenians, just trying to spend our days in something new. We should be like the Reformers, digging up something old.

Because this task of reformation never ends, every person, in every generation, needs to hear—as St. John says—the Eternal Gospel of the good news of their Savior from slavery to sin and eternal death.

Every generation needs to remember the deep severity of sin that led the eternal Son of God to be born of Mary, descended from David, take that severity of sin upon Himself and suffer death on the cross. So that in His life and by His death, sin would be atoned for. And that in simple means of bread and wine, He would give us the fruits of that salvation in His Body and Blood. So that by this salvation, we might abide in His word, learn how to love, truly be His disciples, believe the unchanging Gospel, not just let it fly overhead, know the unchanging truth, and let that truth set us free.

Ipsi omnia gloria in saecula saeculorum. ✠



Daniel Interpreting the Writing on the Wall, Gustav Doré, 1866.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST AND PEACE TO HIS PEOPLE ON EARTH

It is common knowledge that there is a pattern to creation. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. When the sun peeks above the horizon it is morning and when it dips below the western hills, it's nightfall. The moon governs the night, with the stars, all named by their Creator. The oceans swell and recede with the tide like the heartbeat of the earth. Birds and whales migrate with thousands (perhaps millions?) of other creatures while bears settle in for hibernation to rise in the spring. Spring, too, comes with flowers blooming and peals of thunder.

All has its pattern. Even the devil's religion called "Chaos Theory" (our God is a God of order) must follow the pattern of creation to point out variations that are not variants at all but merely the wonder of God's created order. Of course, that won't win any arguments with the acolytes of the devil's religion. They insist that all is accidental or at least incidental and that while it may look like a man it truly could have been born a woman except for one little chromosome that arbitrarily showed up. Even then, these peddlers of fables say that this bothersome chromosome proves chaos because sometimes it gets it wrong. So a woman can be born in a man's body! Rebuke a fool and you will incur his wrath. Better to leave these blind guides alone. They lead the blind and both will fall into the pit (Matthew 15:14).

The pattern of God's creation is not arbitrary. It is ordered. It has purpose. And the purpose of the order is to proclaim

the Lord's handiwork and declare His glory. Creation groans with laborious anticipation of the revealing of the sons of God, waiting to be set free from bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the sons of God (Romans 8:18-25). It is not just that God is a God of order

or that without order nothing makes sense. It is that God desires that His glory be known in all that He creates and does. All is to the glory of God, as we often write at the end of our emails and such, All Glory to God.

This begs the question, or at least gives reason to raise the inquiry: how is the pattern of our lives? Is it a sound pattern or is it tossed to-and-fro like a dingy on the ocean waves? Are we patterned in our little dingy only to seemingly be in the midst of chaotic storms that are so aptly called the storms of life? We all share a common experience: a chaotic schedule, unplanned interruptions, unexpected tragedies and delays.

Ol' Mr. Murphy's law is invoked and credited by us at least as often as the Lord of Glory. Usually with a smirk or a put-upon groan to show that while we might be buffeted by "life's little hiccups" we can shoulder it and soldier through it. We should repent.

We should repent of acting as though we are too busy or that too many things happen to us that cause our lives to be chaotic. If they are chaotic, we should repent of following the god of chaos. The Lord Jesus' life on this mortal coil was fraught with danger all the way, yet He never panicked or was dumbfounded. Lazarus died and



Jesus wept, but He knew why Lazarus had died: to show the glory of God. The blind, the crippled, the lame, the demon-possessed, they all flocked around and pressed in on Him so that there was not even room for Him to eat with His disciples (Mark 3:20). He was often tired and hungry and was on the road constantly. But His life was never chaotic. His life—more than any other—was to the glory and was itself the glory of God. Now, all the more, being the Firstborn from among the dead. God is not glorified in chaos.

We love the story of Jesus calming the sea. We love to preach (and I'm sure people love to hear) how Jesus calms the storms (of life) and the fears of His disciples. Illustrations abound (far too many illustrations abound), but usually they abound in some sort of call for inner peace; that while the storm may rage on, Jesus gives us peace. Whatever. In the text the storm did not rage on. The peace given was not an inner peace, as though the disciples all sat back with a sigh of relief and a chuckle of being "in the know." They were terrified when the storm ceased. He commanded them to be not afraid. The inner peace came at Jesus' resurrection. The storm of death has been silenced.

It is true that this life is groaning and so, at least, seems to be disordered and chaotic. That is not to make light of true hurt and pain. This is not gnostic. St. Paul speaks of shipwrecks and sleeplessness, stonings and betrayals. Life

on this side of glory hurts and can be devastatingly difficult. Yet, the Apostle also says that in all of this he learned from the gospel to be content. The ordering of our life is not in daily schedules or avoiding pain and suffering (God forbid, for in our suffering we are glorified!). The order of life comes in thinking on things above and not on earthly things (Colossians 3:1).

The peace that passes all understanding (not just "human" understanding) is the peace that comes from knowing that all is for the glory of God. It is not an inner peace like the world preaches, but an inner peace from the New Man being formed in us which is the image of Christ. It is not outward peace as the world teaches, our lives working like well-oiled machines, but is an outer peace that submits to the will of the Father in all things that He might be glorified. Our life is ordered in Christ, who is risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of God. He reigns over all things through His Church (Ephesians 3:10) and so we can learn to obey His command and be not afraid.

There is a pattern to the New Creation. The Morning Star rises in our hearts. All creation proclaims His handiwork. Creatures follow the way given them by their Creator. So too, man. We go the Way prepared for us by the Father that we would glorify Him. Thunder peals. To those with ears to hear the voice is that of the Father (John 12:30), "Behold My Beloved in Whom I am well-pleased."

Peace be with you all. ✝

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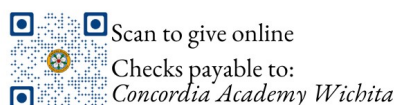
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Fides Quae



Hanc fidem imputat Deus pro iustitia coram ipso.