September 2

Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig

(1783-1872)

Lutheran pastor and hymn writer

On September 2, 1872 Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, a pastor of the Danish Lutheran Church and one of the most prolific hymn writers in the Reformed tradition, died in Copenhagen.
A native of Udby, Denmark, Nicolai Grundtvig was a contemporary of Soren Kierkegaard. Both helped renew their country's Lutheran tradition, although Grundtvig's theological views were very different from those of Kierkegaard.
Grundtvig's basic intuition was that language is the essential vehicle of the spiritual life, and that word conveys spirit both in secular language and in the Church's preaching. He was also profoundly convinced of the importance of human freedom, which for him is confirmed and not denied by the fact that God makes himself known in the act of "speaking." Guided by these intuitions, Grundtvig affirmed that where the Word is preached and then welcomed in a community's profession of faith, the community becomes Church, Christ's holy, living presence in the world.
This dynamic and spiritual notion of the Church, which Grundtvig owed to his study of Luther and of patristic authors such as Irenaeus of Lyon, appears in the more than fifteen hundred hymns he composed. It also made him a forerunner of twentieth-century ecumenism.
In an initiative consistent with his preference for the oral transmission of faith, he founded many "popular superior schools," which inspired the creation of similar institutions in other countries.
Grundtvig endured years of incomprehension and hostility from his own church, but in the last years of his life he was widely recognized as a gifted teacher and pastor.

Martyrs of Papua New Guinea

(d. 1901 and 1942)

Today the Anglican Communion commemorates the martyrs of Papua New Guinea. Twice in the twentieth century, the Church in the Pacific islands received the grace of martyrdom.
James Chalmers, Oliver Tomkins and several of their fellow missionaries, sent to New Guinea by London's Missionary Society, were martyred in 1901.
Forty years later, during the Second World War, New Guinea was occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army, and Christians suffered atrocious persecutions. Among those who died on account of their faith were two English priests, Vivian Redlich and John Barge, who had decided to stay with their congregations after the Japanese invasion of 1942. They were betrayed and decapitated, together with seven Australian preachers and two Papuans, Leslie Gariadi and Lucian Tapiedi. After the Japanese troops had withdrawn, the total number of martyrs, who belonged to almost all of New Guinea's Christian denominations, was counted at more than three hundred.
In 1998, the Church of England commemorated these martyrs by placing a statue of Lucian Tapiedi alongside nine other statues of twentieth-century martyrs on the western facade of Westminster Abbey.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Is 43:1-7; 2 Tim 2:8-13; Mt 10:28-39

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Martyrs of Papua New Guinea

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Antoninus of Apamea (4th cent.), martyr (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (27 misra/nahase):
Poenien and Eudossia of Sasbir (?), martyrs (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, church reformer in Danmark

MARONITES:
Mamas of Gangra (1275), martyr; *Joshua* (2nd millenium BCE), son of Nun

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Mamas of Gangra, martyr; *John the Abstainer* (d. 595), patriarch of Constantinople