

Reflection Monday Week 12 St Alban 2022

St Alban was the first British martyr. Little is known about him for certain – even the date of his martyrdom - possibly between 209 and 314 A.D. probably mid-3rd century. Bede says that Alban lived in a time of intense Christian persecution in England. During one of these persecutions, Alban met a priest fleeing from his tormentors, and he took this priest in. Alban was so impressed with his faith that he himself converted to Christianity. When the persecutors caught up with the priest and came to Alban's home, Alban had (*prior to their arrival*) put on the priest's clothing and stood in his place, so that he would be taken away to be killed instead. And he was. The legends about him are nothing unusual for the time, and does not cast any doubt on his existence. All we know about Alban is all we need to know. He faced an unexpected but simple, straightforward decision, and made the right choice. We do well to remember that it was his entire life and character that were summed up in that single split-second decision. His life made him the sort of man he was.

Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote: Bede added that *when Alban was examined the magistrate asked him, "What is your name, what is your race and your family?" Alban replied, "My name is Alban and I serve the true and living God. I am a Christian and my duties are Christian duties."*

What might those Christian duties look like?

The Christian's duty is of course to the Body of Christ. Not to the Body of Christ as clear, fixed, present reality that you can sign up to, much as you sign up to the Golf Club. But to a mysterious and living community whose fullness has not yet appeared. Christian duty, Christian loyalty is not just to the people who happen to be with you now, but to the future. Christian loyalty and solidarity is being with, and being for, those you have not yet met and a world you have not yet seen. This is why Christians ought to be passionately and sacrificially concerned about the environment. For the very simple reason that we are called to be faithful to the future, a future of people we haven't met and a world we haven't seen.

An old lady had always wanted to travel abroad. Now elderly, she thought she would really like to do so before she died. Having never been out of the country, she began by going in person to the Passport Office and asking how long it would take to obtain one.

"You must take the loyalty oath first," responded the passport clerk. "Raise your right hand, please." The old lady raised her right hand.

"Do you swear to defend the Constitution of the United States against all its enemies, domestic or foreign?" was the first question.

The little old lady's face paled and her voice trembled as she asked in a small voice, "Uhhh... all by myself?"