

Day 223 – Thursday, October 29

It must be time for one of my favorite stories

WE ARE THREE, YOU ARE THREE

When his ship stopped at a remote island for a day, the bishop determined to use the time as profitably as possible. He strolled along the seashore and came across three fishermen attending to their nets. In Pidgin English they announced to him that centuries before they had been Christianized by missionaries. “We, are Christians!” they said, proudly pointing to one another.

The bishop was impressed. Did they know the Lord’s Prayer? They had never heard of it. The bishop was shocked.

“What do you say, then, when you pray?”

“We lift eyes in heaven. We pray, We are three, you are three, have mercy on us.” The bishop was appalled at the primitive, the downright heretical, nature of the prayer. So he spent the whole day teaching them the Lord’s Prayer. The fishermen were poor learners, but they gave it all they had and before the bishop sailed away next day he had the satisfaction of hearing them go through the formula faultlessly.

Months later his ship happened to pass by those islands again and the bishop, as he paced the deck reciting evening prayer, recalled with pleasure the three men on that distant island who were now able to pray, thanks to his patient efforts.

Suddenly he saw a spot of light in the east that kept approaching the ship and, as he gazed in wonder, he saw three figures walking on the water. The captain stopped the boat and everyone leaned over the rails to see this sight.

They were the bishop’s fishermen, of course. “Bishop,” they exclaimed, “We hear your boat go past and come hurry-hurry meet you.”

“What is it you want?” asked the awe-stricken bishop.

“Bishop,” they said, “We so, so sorry. We forget lovely prayer. We say: Our Father in heaven, holy be your name, your kingdom come... then we forget. Tell us prayer again. ”

It was a chastened bishop who replied, “Go back to your homes, my friends, and each time you pray, say, “We are three, you are three, and have mercy on us!”

In the light of eternity, we’re here for a very short time, really. We’re here for one thing, ultimately: to learn how to love, because God is love. - James Finley

Sincerely,
Fr. Jim Kaptein