

Convent, 2016

Saint Giles (c.650 - c.710)

Giles was a Greek Christian hermit from Athens. He settled in Gaul to escape his high reputation in Greece, and became for many years a solitary/hermit in a forest near Nîmes. He spent many years in solitude there, but eventually was called to found a monastery. This monastery, at Saint-Gilles-du-Gard, became a place of pilgrimage, and a stop on the road that led from Arles to Santiago de Compostela, the Camino of St James.

His life and personality became a magnet for pious legends, behind which a coherent biography is sometimes hard to discern. He is the patron saint of Edinburgh, whose cathedral church is dedicated to him.

A recurring theme for all solitaries and hermits, and by extension all Christian people, when there is no one else, just you and God: the question poses itself, What is the absolute goal of my life? The unique and absolute goal of life in Christ, is theosis, our union with God, so that humankind - through our participation in God's uncreated energy - may become "by the Grace of God", that which God is by nature, (without beginning and without end). This, I believe, is what "salvation" means, in Christianity."

As Christians we know that salvation is an ongoing process that, as believers, we are called to cooperate in. We are called to "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). The Apostle Paul made clear the necessity of human cooperation, when he told us to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is

God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:1-13)".

Our salvation is a life-long process by which we become more and more like Christ. Our faith is a free gift from God, not dependent upon anything we can do, but this life long process of salvation requires that we cooperate with God's grace, that we might be transformed by the Holy Spirit, and made holy.