

Prayer of St Boniface
('Another Dawn')

You could hardly avoid knowing (if you listen to the radio at all these days) that there's a Referendum on membership of the European common-market taking place today in Britain. Well, I'm not going to talk about that — not directly, anyway. Just that there's a curious coincidence about the date of it, and today's festival in the universal calendar of the Church. I don't suppose Mr Harold Wilson, or whoever it was decided on the date for the Referendum checked the Church calendar along with the political one and all the other factors that had to be consulted (even the Zodiac, maybe: who knows?). Looking for auspicious days is nothing new in the world, especially for important occasions — ask almost anyone in the population of HK. There is a religious significance in this — or there was until politicians and economists became the high-priests and augurers of the modern industrial, secularised, society. By now, saints' days don't count for much, if they're remembered at all except for a few national ones. So it's a nice irony, that Britain chose for its Referendum day about Europe the festival day of an English saint who, centuries ago, went into Europe and transformed it. He's left his name, his mark and his fame over countries that now are the heart of the common market area, and it is in fact probably better known there than in his native England. St Boniface was one of the most European-minded Englishmen that has ever lived. Born about the year 673 in Devon, he became a Benedictine monk in the monastery of Exeter, and in 719 went to Germany where he was a very successful apostle and became Bishop of Mainz. He also did a lot of work in France where he, practically, re-organised the Church, and in Holland where he was

martyred in 754, being buried at the monastery of Fulda. In addition to being one of the greatest missionaries the Church has known (he restored or founded a large number of dioceses all over western Germany and northern Europe), St Boniface was one of the main architects of the socio-political order in medieval Europe, an order which (to quote the English writer, and admirer of Boniface, Christopher Dawson) was grounded in "the conception of Europe as the commonwealth of Christian peoples: a single society, consisting of a diversity of peoples and states, bound together by a network of mutual rights and obligations, and founded on a common spiritual citizenship and a common moral and intellectual culture". Of course it wasn't just an economic community that Boniface fostered: and most people today have little idea of the social confusion and disintegration of the Germany that Boniface went to, or the stabilising and developing influence that he and his companions were in the emergence of a new society and social system in those days. Much of the criticism and anti-Europe arguments put forward in Britain today, centre on the excessive importance of economy, big business and so on in the European Economic Community. But it's not only there that this is true: HK isn't any different. May St Boniface remind us all that human society and social order depend on much more than trade and industry — that a market by itself doesn't make a community, and that all men are called to the community of Christ with the Father, and the Holy Spirit. And for our prayer in music today, an anthem of Purcell, "Remember not, Lord, our offenses"
MUSIC - PRAYERS

From a letter of St Boniface: Q. (Brewster III p 40^x)