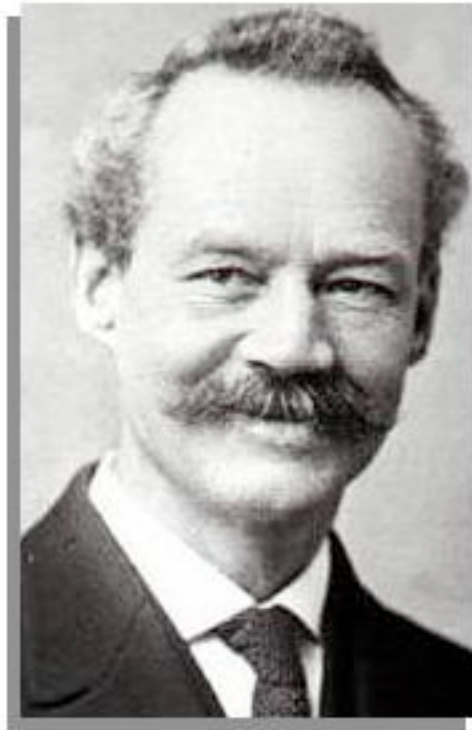


Saint of the Week: Wilfred Thomason Grenfell, Medical Missionary (1865-1940)

Observed 9 October



Wilfred Grenfell studied medicine in London and there was so impressed by visiting American preacher D. L. Moody that he determined to commit himself to a life of service. He was commissioned by the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen shortly after his graduation in 1888. He served on the North Sea and in the North Atlantic from Iceland to North America, becoming a master mariner and outfitting their first hospital ship. He was captivated by the rugged territory on Canada's Atlantic coast and determined to bring medical care to northern New Foundland and Labrador. He recruited other doctors and nurses to join him in establishing a regular hospital and a string of nursing stations along the coast. Although the mission was targeted at the fishermen, Grenfell extended his care and concern to their families, and other local inhabitants (both native and European). He and his fellow laborers established schools, churches, libraries, work cooperatives, clothing distribution centers, and an orphanage - and worked to see that all sorts of services were provided to the local inhabitants. He was so in love with this rugged country that he wrote many books about its needs, its history, and its people. These proved very popular and helped to raise consciousness and financial support for his work there. Grenfell met and married an American woman (Anne Elizabeth Caldwell MacClanahan) on one of his speaking tours raising support for his work. She became deeply involved in that work, sharing in the labors, editing his manuscripts, and organizing his speaking tours. They continued their work until ill health forced retirement shortly before they both died.

Grenfell received many awards throughout his life, including a knighthood, conferred by King George V in recognition of his extraordinary lifelong service to the people of these remote communities. His faith motivated all that he did, as he regularly asked himself, "What would Christ do in my place?"

In 1997 he was inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame and his home in Saint Anthony (the town on the tip of the Newfoundland's northern peninsula where he had established his first hospital) has been converted into a museum where one can explore the history of his life and ministry. He continues to be revered among Canadians of all backgrounds as a shining example of Christianity lived with one's whole self. He was one who truly understood Jesus' call to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, care for the sick and oppressed, offering each one the bountiful love of God.

An inspiring quote attributed to Grenfell: "The service we render to others is really the rent we pay for our room on this earth. It is obvious that man is himself a traveler; that the purpose of this world is not 'to have and to hold' but 'to give and serve.' There can be no other meaning."

Lessons: 2 Kings 2:19-22; Psalm 101:23-32; I Corinthians 12:1-11; Mark 6:45-56

Collect: Compassionate God, whose Son Jesus Christ taught that by ministering to the least of our brothers and sisters, we minister to him: Make us ever ready to respond to the needs of others, that, inspired by the ministry of Wilfred Grenfell to the sick and to seafarers in Labrador and northern Newfoundland, our actions may witness to the love of our Savior Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.