

23rd April 2021

George

**“Follow your spirit; and, upon this charge
Cry, ‘God for Harry! England and Saint George!’”**

William Shakespeare, Henry V

In a recurring line from one of her monologues from the 1950s, the actress, Joyce Grenfell, addresses a Nursery School child with the admonition:

George – don’t do that!

What the recalcitrant George is *actually* doing, why he keeps doing it and what necessitates him having to stop it is, of course, left to one’s fertile imagination. But my wife and I seldom hear the name “George” without one of us adding “Don’t to that!” – like Pavlov’s responsive dogs!

Today, April 23rd, we remember St George, England’s patron saint. We actually know as little about *this* George as of Joyce Grenfell’s George. But the parts of legend are worth noting. We’re told that St George served in the Roman army as a member of the Praetorian Guard for the emperor, Diocletian, and that he was executed for not recanting his Christian faith. But the most enduring legend is that of St George and the dragon.

A fierce dragon was causing panic at the city of Silene (in modern Libya). As an appeasement, two sheep were given each day to the dragon. When the sheep weren’t enough, humans were sacrificed, each one in turn being elected by the city’s people. When the king’s daughter was chosen, no one was willing to take her place. But George rescued the girl by slaying the dragon with a lance. The grateful king offered him treasures as a reward for saving the girl’s life, but George simply gave these to the poor.

Make of that what you will, but let’s admire St George: standing for his faith; stepping forward when the need arose; spurning praise for his valour; giving his wealth to the poor. Whatever dragons threaten us now, the St George in all of us needs to come to the fore. Whatever rewards we might gain, we still need to be aware of the needs of the poor among us. And, whenever we do good, we hope we’ll hear this recurring admonition:

George – keep doing that!

A prayer for today

Dragons, Lord? Scary stuff! Give me the willingness and the faith to step forward when I’m needed. And equip me with what I require to win out today. Amen.

An original reflection by @ Tom Gordon Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>