June 8

Thomas Ken

(1637-1711)

pastor and hymn writer

Today Anglicans commemorate Thomas Ken, a bishop of Bath and Wells and a hymn writer in the Church of England.
In an time of upheaval in British politics and in the episcopate, Thomas stood out because he exercised his pastoral ministry in a humble, evangelical way, and because his integrity allowed him to remain faithful to the Gospel first and foremost, but also to his country's civil institutions.
Born in Berkhamstead in 1637, Thomas Ken studied at Oxford's New College. Known as a generous and equable man, he became King Charles II's royal chaplain and was later consecrated bishop of Bath and Wells. Notwithstanding his relationship with the king, Ken took the liberty of criticizing him openly when Charles did not act in accordance with his faith.
With the ascent to the throne of the Catholic king James II, Ken's situation became precarious. On June 8, 1688 he was imprisoned in the Tower of London because he had refused to publish in his diocese a decree reinstating the practice of indulgences. Having nonetheless pledged his faithfulness to the king, Ken refused to recognize the next king, the Protestant William of Orange, who in his opinion had taken the throne illegitimately. Ken was removed from the episcopal ministry and lived poorly and simply for the rest of his life in a quiet country retreat, where he wrote some of the Anglican liturgy's most famous hymns and did what he could to instill peace among the different minds of Christian England.
Thomas Ken died on March 19, 1711.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Ger 9:23-24; 2 Cor 4:1-10; Mt 24:42-46

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Thomas Ken, bishop of Bath and Wells, nonjuror, hymn writer

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (1 ba'unah/sane):
Carpus (1st cent.), one of the 70 disciples (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
August Hermann Francke (d. 1727), theologian at Halle
Hermann Bezzel (d. 1917), theologian in Bavaria

MARONITES:
Finding of the nails of Christ

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Removal of the relics of Theodore the Stratilate, megalomartyr
Marcian, Nicander and companions of Durostorum (4th cent.), martyrs (Romanian Church)