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Jan. 18, St. Deicolus, Irish missionary

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NCR Today

> *Columbanus asked, "Why are you always smiling?"*
> *Deicolus answered, "Because no one can take God from me."*

Today is the feast of St. Deicolus, a Leinster man, the older brother of St. Gall.

Both men entered the monastery at Bangor, County Down. When St. Columbanus received permission from the abbot to go out as a missionary, he included Deicolus and Gall among the twelve monks who accompanied him to Britain and then to France, where they founded the Abbey of Luxeuil.

When Columbanus was driven out of France in 610, his disciple Gall accompanied him as far as Lake Constance. Columbanus went on to Italy, where he founded the monastery of Bobbio, and Gall stayed in Switzerland, where, after his death, the Abbey of St. Gall would be built on the site of his hermitage.

Deicolus attempted to leave France with Columbanus and Gall, but he was too old. He was overcome by fatigue a few miles from Luxeuil and remained behind, alone. He settled in a deserted place called Lure. Soon men joined him at what would become the Abbey of Lure, destined to be "one of the richest abbeys of France", that "twelve centuries later numbered princes of the Roman Empire among its abbots."

In 1895, Margaret Stokes, the Irish archaeologist and illustrator, published *Three Months in the Forests of France: A Pilgrimage in Search of Vestiges of the Irish Saints in France.* She recounted several charming legends of St. Deicolus, including the story of a "huge boar" who took refuge in the monk's cell from King Clothair's pack of hounds. "The saint, laying his hand upon his head, said to him, 'Since thou has sought charity here, thou shalt find safely also.'"

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