

Canopy of Prayer

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Dear praying friends in Europe

One of the greatest gifts God has given to Europe, is his Gospel.

Thus through the centuries nation by nation opened to the Gospel. Europe's culture and its values and taboos are shaped by the 10 Jewish commandments and the teaching of Jesus and his redemption through love. The Gospel brought the Europeans liberation from the fear of gods and ghosts. Without this liberation from animism, Europe would never have become the pioneer for the world. "Go into all the world, for to Me is given all power in heaven and on earth." This commission, combined with the experience of divine power and love to the last, motivated missionaries of all ages. Europe entered its redemptive purpose through the Gospel. Europe, "Do not forget!"

Ortwin Schweitzer

The roots of Finland: between myth and reality

"Finnish people are the happiest in the world". That at least is what the recent World Happiness report concluded. Moreover, the whole world praises the Finnish education system. Economically Finland is one of the most prosperous nations in the world.

And yet Finland is a land with very little raw material as well as a hostile climate. How is it, then, that Finland succeeded in becoming so successful today? What are the roots of such a success? The secular narrative explains that the roots of our European societies are to be found in Greece and Rome, ignoring the overwhelming contribution of Christianity through the centuries.

Such a narrative also exists in Finland. The Departure of Väinämöinen is a nineteenth-century painting that confirms this point of view. The colourful scene in front shows Väinämöinen, a god of Finnish pre-Christian paganism, leaving. Next to him are two men and a little boy with an unclear face playing the Finnish national instrument, the kantele. The second, bleaker scene in the background depicts many serious, pale people worshipping a mother with a little baby. The artist of this painting, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, seems to communicate that Christianity robbed Finland of its cultural roots in paganism.

Such a myth actually removes Finland from the very roots that gave life to the Finnish nation. Finnish paganism, with its emphasis on nature worship, kept people in servitude, as man can never subdue what he worships. Thus it is clear that we cannot possibly trace the roots of the Finnish success to pre-Christian paganism, as the secular narratives seem to suggest.

When the first Finnish people came into contact with Christians (most probably from Sweden), they discovered that they were made in the image of a God who was above nature. This was the turning point of Finnish history. Christianity came to Finland through Catholicism from the West (Sweden) and Orthodoxy from the East (Russia) in the beginning of the second millennium. In the sixteenth century, the country adopted the Reformation. The Gospel gave Finland communities, a written language, literacy, education, healthcare and political organisation, to name but a few. These elements were all fruits of the Gospel among the Finns.

Today's secularised Finland is cut off from its roots. Just like a tree without roots, secularism is doomed to die. Here lies an opportunity for the Finnish Church to present the Gospel by showing the wonderful impact it has had on the history and present prosperity of the nation.



Let us pray:

- that Finnish people would remember and return to God;
- that the Finnish people would realise how much God has done for them in their history;
- that the Finnish Church would seek God's wisdom for the issues that Finland is facing today.



After the European Parliament elections, it is now the turn of the Commission to be renewed.

On June 20-21, the national leaders will meet in the European Council to decide a candidate for President of Commission by qualified majority vote then, at the first European Parliament plenary, there will be a vote on this nominee by simple majority. After this, member states will propose their candidates for Commission, who will be assigned their areas of responsibility by the new President and vetted by the Parliament in September.

Additional prayer points:-

1. The danger to the Euro-Zone from Italy was already real but has become more imminent due to the politics of Salvini.
2. Moldova faces a new political crisis after inconclusive elections led to the President being deposed. The interim President announced the dissolution of parliament and new elections. Pray for this small nation, one of Europe's poorest, as they deal with this turmoil.

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