

Dear Friend

You may already be aware that today is St Swithun's Day. St Swithun was Bishop of Winchester from his consecration on 30 October 852 until his death on 2 July 863. However, he is scarcely mentioned in any document of his own time. His death is entered in the Canterbury manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (MS F) under the year 861.

More than a hundred years later, when Dunstan and Æthelwold of Winchester were inaugurating their church reform, Swithun was adopted as patron of the restored church at Winchester, formerly dedicated to St Peter and St Paul. His body was transferred from its almost forgotten grave to Æthelwold's new basilica on 15 July 971. *Source Wikipedia*

The name of Swithun is best known today for a proverb, which says that if it rains on St. Swithun's day, 15 July, it will rain for 40 days.

*St Swithun's day if thou dost rain*

*For forty days it will remain*

*St Swithun's day if thou be fair*

*For forty days 'twill rain nae mare*

A Buckinghamshire variation has

*If on St Swithun's day it really pours*

*You're better off to stay indoors.*

The event that led to St Swithun's association with the weather was that there was a torrential downpour as his body was being moved, followed by 40 days of rain.

We know next to nothing about Swithun's life, and the accounts of miracles and the legends that have grown up around him are not to be relied on as they arose many years after his death. What is known is that he was a humble Bishop, concerned to restore the church both as buildings as well as in spiritual terms. He was also a trusted adviser to King Egbert of Wessex.

It seems to me that rather than focusing on the legends that have grown up around the name of Swithun, that we should rather use this day to reflect on what it means to be a humble servant of the Lord, and to pray for the church leaders of today that they would seek to be first and foremost servants of the flock.

Verses for today: For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

*2 Corinthians 4.5-6*

May you stay dry today - should it rain - but also may you be drenched in the dew of the Holy Spirit who comes to refresh our souls.

With much love and prayer

Simon



Q: What's worse than raining buckets?

A: Hailing taxis!

Q: How can you wrap a cloud?

A: With a rainbow.