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ARCHIMEDES

Mathematician
(287-212BC)

Archimedes was born in 287BC in Syracuse, a Greek seaport colony in Sicily. He was really brilliant at maths and mechanics and lots of other things. He loved finding maths problems to solve. Sometimes he was so absorbed that he would forget to eat!

One day his friend King Hiero asked him to solve a problem for him. The king had given a lump of gold to his goldsmith and ordered him to make a crown, but when it was finished, the king suspected that the goldsmith had tricked him and mixed silver in with the gold, even though the crown weighed the same as the lump of gold.

How was Archimedes to prove it?

He decided to go and have a good soak in the public baths and think about it. The bath boys filled his bath right to the brim and when Archimedes stepped in a lot of the water overflowed onto the marble floor.

Suddenly something clicked in his genius brain. He had the answer to the problem and couldn't wait to get home to do an experiment. He jumped out of the bath and ran along the road completely naked, forgetting his towel.

'Eureka!' he yelled. 'Eureka!' (which means 'I have found it')

Archimedes just happened to have a lump of gold the same as the one the king had given to the goldsmith. He filled a container with water and put in the gold. Then he measured the amount of water which overflowed. Then he refilled the container and put in the crown. More water overflowed!

Archimedes knew that gold was heavier than silver so the goldsmith would have had to put more silver into the crown to make up the weight. That means that the crown was bigger than it would have been, and so made more water overflow.

He rushed to tell the king (without forgetting to get dressed first!)

Archimedes made many new discoveries in maths and new ways of working out mathematical problems. He was also very good at inventing things and he designed weapons to defend the city from the invading Romans in 212BC. He made huge wooden cranes which could grab ships, lift them out of the water and tip them up. He made a series of mirrors which reflected the sun into the enemies' eyes and also a large catapult, called a trebuchet, which hurled rocks at the soldiers.

No wonder the Roman soldiers were afraid to go near the city. It took Marcellus, the Roman General, eight months to finally conquer Syracuse.

Archimedes was unaware that the soldiers were coming and sat working out mathematical problems with a stick in the sand. Suddenly the figure of a Roman soldier loomed over him, stepping on his circles drawn on the ground.

‘Don’t disturb my circles!’ yelled Archimedes.

‘Stand up!’ roared the soldier, but Archimedes was concentrating on his mathematical problem and he ignored him.

The soldier was so angry that he drew his sword and killed Archimedes.

Prayer for the Day:

Help us to put our best efforts into our work.

GLADYS AYLWARD

Missionary to China
(1904-1970)

Gladys Aylward was born in London in 1904 and as a young woman she worked for a while as a parlour maid. Sometimes during her time off she would go to religious meetings and hear about people devoting their life to the service of God. Gladys yearned to go to China to become a missionary but she failed the exam at the China Inland Mission Centre in London.

Not to be put off, she worked hard and saved money. Then she heard that an elderly missionary called Jeannie Lawson wanted someone to help her and she applied for the job. Jeannie said that the job was hers if she could get to China.

It took a long time for Gladys to save up her fare and she went into the travel agent every week to pay off a bit more. At last she had her ticket and she went to China by the cheapest route - overland to Moscow and then with the Trans Siberian railway right across to Mongolia, then down into China. It took a long time.

Finally she reached Yangchen, a small town where mule caravans stopped overnight in their long journeys carrying things such as cotton, coal and iron goods. This was where Jeannie Lawson had her mission.

Gladys and Mrs Lawson opened an overnight inn called The Inn of the Sixth Happiness. This became the title of a film made about her life.

Mrs Lawson was getting old and one day she had a fall and died. Gladys ran the inn with the help of a Chinese cook called Yang. She learnt Chinese so that she could tell stories of Jesus to the overnight guests while they ate their meal.

Gladys Aylward met the Mandarin of Yangchen, and they became friends. He appointed her foot inspector as the government had just ended the practice of footbinding. They needed someone to go round to all the villages making sure that this practice was stopped. Previously baby girls had their feet bound tightly to stop them growing, as small feet were considered beautiful. As a result the grown women had tiny feet and could not walk properly.

Gladys took on this position but found it very difficult to enforce as the men liked their women with small feet.

One day during her travels, she came across a poor starving boy with no family and she took him home and called him 'Ninepence'. Gradually her band of orphans grew and the children gave her a Chinese name - Ai-weh-deh.

In 1938 war broke out between Japan and China and the Japanese eventually invaded her village. Word about her had spread and the Japanese were giving a reward of \$100 for her capture so she decided to take all the children - by now 100 - over the mountains to the safety of an orphanage in Sian.

The trek took three weeks and there was always the danger of being caught by the Japanese as well as having very little food. When they finally arrived, Gladys collapsed with typhus fever.

In 1947 after the second world war, Gladys Aylward returned to England to preach. She died in 1970.

Prayer for the Day:

Please help us to persevere with things that we really want to do and not give up when it gets difficult.